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African Violet MAGAZINE

November • December 2005 Volume 58 Number 6

AVSA Information

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ARTICLES BY MEMBERS, COLUMNISTS AND MEMORIALS: Send to Editor.

Please Note: Deadlines - Articles and Columnists: Jan. issue - Oct. 1; Mar. issue - Dec. 1; May issue - Feb. 1; July issue - Apr 1; Sept. issue - June 1; Nov. issue - Aug. 1.

COMING EVENTS: Send to Editor.

Coming Events Deadlines: - Jan. issue - Nov. 1; Mar. issue - Jan. 1; May issue - Mar. 1; July issue - May 1; Sept. issue - July 1; Nov. issue - Sept. 1.

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Advertising rates and information: Judith Carter, 1825 W. Lincoln St., Broken Arrow, OK 74012. *E-mail* avmads@valornet.com.

ADVERTISING DEADLINES: Jan./Feb. issue - Nov. 1; Mar./Apr. issue - Jan. 1; May/June issue - Mar. 1; July/Aug. issue - May 1; Sept./Oct. issue - July 1; Nov./Dec. issue - Sept. 1.

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The African Violet Magazine (ISSN 0002-0265) is published bi-monthly: January, March, May, July, September, November.
Periodical postage is paid by The African Violet Society of America, Inc., a non-profit organization, at 2375 North Street, Beaumont, TX 77702 and at additional mailing offices.
Subscription $25.00 per year which is included in membership dues. • Copyright 2005 The African Violet Society of America, Inc.
POSTMASTER: Please send change of address form 3579 to African Violet Magazine, 2375 North Street, Beaumont, TX 77702

African Violet MAGAZINE

November • December Volume 58 Number 6

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Hurricane Rita Update 4
Remembering Ethel Champion 5
Constructing a Terrarium - M.J. Tyler 8
A Special Offer From Pat Hancock, Hybridizer of the "Buckeye" African Violets! 8
Ma's Moody Monday - Olive Ma Robinson 9
Propagating Violets From Leaves - Marie Montague 10
Hybridizing African Violets is Fun - Margaret Taylor 11
In Memory 11
Too Much Light? - C.A.Cromer 14
Coming Events Deadlines 15
Organize Your Growing Area - Mary Ann Switzer 16
Russian Hybrids to be Registered - Joe Bruns 20
How Do Plants Grow? 23
Storing Seeds - Stan Sudol 25
AVSA Member Advertising Rates 27
Mites 27
Sinningia 'White Sprite' - Carolyn Conlin-Lane 32
Best Holtkamp Collection, 2005 National Show - Kathy Lahti 33
What is a Gesneriad? - John Beaulieu 34
Francine Pilon, Canadian Hybridizer - Nancy Robitaille 35
Growing in Natural Light - Sue Hodges 39
Design - Anne M. Nicholas 40
Pythium - Georgene Albrecht 41
Trailers - Nancy Robitaille 42
Start a New Plant - Ina Beavers 44
Interpretive Designs - Bob Green 46
Worth Repeating...No One Wants a Scrawny Neck! - Virginia W. Gasper 47
Chrita gemella - Sharon Kemp 49
Tips for the Tiny Ones - Georgene Albrecht 50
Amateurish Violets - Suzie Larouche 51
Streptocarpus - Beverly Williams 52
Comments for Exhibits - Sue Ramser 54
Planting by Moon Signs 57
Basic Care - Sheila Walton 58
Beating Those Long Winter Blues - JoAnne Brown 59
What Does it Mean? 60
Saving the Wrangler Legacy - Christopher Mason 60

DEPARTMENTS

Index of Ads 2
Officers & Staff 2
President's Message - Linda Owens 3
Small Talk - Laurel D. Goretsky 6
Showcase 12
Membership Application 15
Affiliate Update - Bev Promersberger 17
AVSA Building Maintenance Fund - Susan Hapner 17
Question Box - Sue Haffner 18
Statement of Ownership 20
AVSA's Best Variety List for 2005 - Floyd Lawson 21
A Family Portrait - Georgene Albrecht 22
AVSA Booster Fund - Shirley Berger 23
"And the winners are..." - Mary J. Corondon 24
In Search of New Violets - Dr. Jeff Smith 26
Showcase 28
For Beginners - Cheryl Salatino 30
Registration Report - Joe Bruns 38
Boyce Edens Research Fund - Marlene J. Buck 45
Vintage Violets - Barbara Elkin 48
AVSA Most Wanted - Barbara Elkin 48
Coming Events 48

CONVENTION

The American Swedish Institute - Ruth Bann 45
Science Museum of Minnesota - Ruth Bann 56

COVER

Sunnyvale Trail
Best Trailing African Violet
2005 AVSA National Show
Exhibited by: **Bill Price**
Hybridized by: **T. Khoe**
Semiminiature Trailer

Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

Index of Advertisers

African Rainforest Conservancy 61
African Violet and Gesneriad News 62
African Violet Pressed Flower Candles 63
AGGS . . . . . Inside Back Cover
American Orchid Society 61
AVS of Canada . . . . . Inside Back Cover
Belisle's Violet House 63
Beverly's Violets & Gifts 63
Bluebird Greenhouses 63
Cape Cod Violetry 62
Cryptanthus Society . . . . . Inside Back Cover
Dave's Violets 63
Growing to Show 63
Hobby Greenhouse . . . . . Inside Back Cover
Indoor Gardening Supplies 64
Insects, Pests, and Diseases of the African Violet Family 64
Jan's Workshop 61
JoS Violets 61
LED Grow Lights 61
Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses 63
Mrs Strep Streps 63
Neptune's Harvest 63
Out of Africa 64
Pat's Pets 62
Physan 20 . . . . . Inside Back Cover
Prairie Violets 62
Rainbow Violets 61
Reed's Greenhouse 62
Rob's Violets . . . . . Back Cover
The African Violetry 64
Travis' Violets 62
Violet Gallery 61
Violet Perfection 64
Violet Showcase 64

THE AFRICAN VIOLET SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC. ORG. 1946

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Every attempt is made to keep articles technically correct. Since the growing of fine African violets can be achieved in many ways, the methods and opinions expressed by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of AVSA.

President's Message

Dear AVSA Members,

You will notice in this issue that Cheryl Salatino has joined Elmer Godeny in writing the Beginner's Column. Welcome, Cheryl. We will all be looking forward to her helpful hints.

Thank you, Sharon Holtzman, for your contributions to the Beginner's Column in the past. We appreciate the help that you gave us.

I've been having time for everything except violets. We finished moving out of our summer cottage that we'd had for 25 years. I had piles of "essentials" from the place all over my house. I was slowly weeding through everything when my hard drive died. I've spent about four weeks trying to restore everything. If I haven't been responsive to someone, I apologize. Your email may be on the old hard drive. If I didn't respond, please send your email again.

This has been an unusually eventful weather season. The hurricane in the Gulf states has severely hurt many of our members. I'm sure that they aren't thinking about their violets yet, but at some point in the future they will want to restock their shelves. Let's all be ready to help when that time comes. Our thoughts are with all of them and their families for as rapid a return to normalcy as possible.

I recently received word about the death of Ethel Champion. Ethel had maintained the plant 'Superman' for over fifty years. Just last year, Joyce Stork was given the opportunity to take the plant and continue caring for it as Ethel's health had been failing. She was a wonderful hybridizer. I remember that when I first started growing violets, I acquired one with Champion variegation. It was such a thrill for me to meet the hybridizer who had developed that type of variegation. Our hearts go out to all of her family and friends.

Joyce Stork, Mollie Howell, Jim, and I recently returned from Denver where we met with the local group who will be hosting the 2007 convention. The weather was unusually hot with highs in the 90s. Everyone there is very excited about their convention, and they have some great plans made already. I think that everyone will like the hotel, and the food in the restaurant was very good, although way too plentiful. Since it is a Doubletree Hotel, we were given those warm chocolate chip cookies when we checked in. Everyone can look forward to those.

The Executive committee will be meeting at Lone Star in November for our fall meeting. I hope to see a great show from the Texas group.

I hope that everyone will have happy holidays.

Linda

Linda Owens
President, AVSA

Hurricane Rita Update

We appreciate all of you who called or sent messages, asking how we made it through Hurricane Rita. Jenny was on vacation in Italy and England, watching the storm, hoping that she would still be able to fly into Houston on the day Rita made landfall. Amy, our office secretary, secured the valuable computer equipment, and taking the system back-up tapes with her, evacuated to family in central Texas. My husband, our two dogs, and I had just begun our long-awaited vacation on the upper Texas coast. Knowing the call of a "mandatory evacuation" was coming the next day, we headed home, unloaded beach supplies, and evacuated north to family in the Dallas area. Normally a four-hour drive, it took us nine hours this time, as we joined other evacuees on the crowded highway.

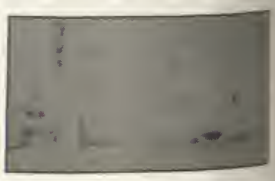
The three of us were very fortunate. Although our homes were damaged, our families were safe and we were able to get out of Rita's path. Jenny and her husband flew into Chicago, and stayed with friends until they were able to get a flight to Austin, where her sons reside. We kept in touch with each other and the AVSA Executive Committee by phone. Beaumont and the rest of Jefferson County suffered severe damage, and county and city officials, backed by the National Guard, "locked-down" the city and county in an effort to prevent looting and for the safety of the citizens.

At first, upon returning, we thought that the AVSA office building had fared well. All over the historic Old Town area, other homes had trees and limbs on the roofs and in the yards, and roofing shingles were everywhere. There were many tree limbs on the office lawn, along with roofing shingles, and sections of the siding from the building. We noticed water stains on the ceiling and walls of the upper floor, particularly my office, and the ceiling of the secretary's work area directly under mine. The office was permeated with the smell of mildew. Water stains are on the walls and ceiling of the stairwell and the storage room where the AVSA Archives are located. Amy and I had moved the archive materials across the room to the other side, so don't worry about AVSA's history; it is intact.

Insurance adjusters are difficult to come across these days, and when ours did arrive, we realized that repairing the office to its pre-Rita condition would not be easily done. With all of the sheet rock that must be replaced, and testing that will be conducted on the mold in the building, we will have to relocate the AVSA office for what could possibly stretch into a few months. We are looking into temporary rental space, and hope to find some soon. Once we do, we will operate as usual, with phones and mail forwarded.

Our insurance deductible for the building is $10,000, and with the immediate cost for repair and relocation, Rita is indeed an expensive storm for AVSA. If you ever thought about donating to the AVSA Building Maintenance Fund, now is the time to do so. Every bit will help.

Through the AVSA web site www.avsa.org, we will keep you informed about the situation with repairs to the office, and I will photograph the progress to keep our members up to date.

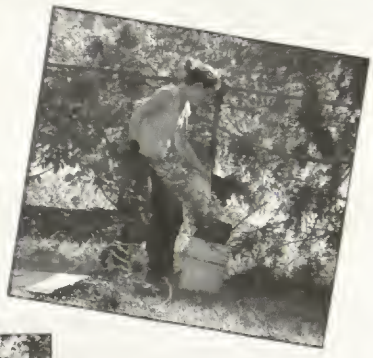


I've including here photos I've taken of damage to the office, and the clean-up of the outside area. I have also included a couple of photos that demonstrate the damage this storm inflicted on the city of Beaumont. One is a typical street scene that I photographed a couple of blocks from the office. On either side of the street are enormous piles of debris; branches and trees that have been cut and placed at the curb for workers to haul across town. Another is the massive mountain of this debris that is added to daily. I've been told that under this mountain is a long pit, and the debris will be "trench burned", a method of complete combustion, which will produce very little smoke.

Disaster relief, utility workers, and tree services from all

over the country have assisted our county and city. Just in my neighborhood alone I have seen utility trucks from New Jersey, Ohio, Colorado, and a van of disaster relief folks from Ontario, Canada. We have also had military planes spraying for mosquitoes. We appreciate everyone for helping us overcome the aftermath of this terrible storm.

Ruth



Remembering Ethel Champion

We mourn the loss of African violet enthusiast Ethel Champion, who passed away September 12, 2005, just eleven days before her 90th birthday this September 23rd. Ethel was renowned throughout the African violet community for her hybridizing accomplishments and was best known for her famous Champion crown variegated foliage. She also lays claim to having the oldest known African violet in existence which she aptly named 'Superman'. Ethel had even led workshops in Washington D.C. where she showed Superman and had its 50th birthday celebrated. The plant has now been passed on to Joyce Stork at the AVSA Convention in Cincinnati last April to keep 'Superman' going strong. As well as writing many informative articles for the AVSA, Ethel was very active in the New York State AVS, holding many offices throughout the years, and was one of the few surviving charter members. She was also very active in her local club, the AVS of Syracuse. Ethel is survived by her husband Duane and four children. All who knew her were touched by her interminable spirit and love of life. She will truly be missed by all.

Small Talk

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The weather is growing cool, and we are spending a lot more time inside enjoying the beautiful colors of our African violets. I am sure the world would be a happier place if more people grew violets!

I appreciate the individual beauty of each of the violets in my collection, but I feel a special sense of accomplishment when I am growing a variegated violet successfully. I don't want to scare anyone into avoiding growing variegated miniatures and semiminiatures, but I do find these violets a bit more challenging. I love the challenge, and the reward is enjoying a striking variety in your collection.

Before I name some of my favorite variegated varieties, I want to look a little bit at the history of variegated leaves and some of the points to keep in mind when propagating, repotting, and growing variegated miniatures and semiminiatures.

The first African violet that was introduced with variegated foliage was 'Tommy Lou' in 1959. Variegation is considered a mutation (or sport). By definition, a mutant or sport is a sudden change or variation. To be considered a mutant or sport, the offspring would show a definite change from the parents. Mutations sometimes occur naturally or are caused intentionally. In the case of 'Tommy Lou', the mutation occurred spontaneously as a different plant on a rooted leaf of 'White Pride' (reference from AVSA handbook pg. 20). In order to cause a mutation to occur intentionally, a grower might attempt to change the chemical arrangement of the plant with chemicals, radiation, and other methods of plant engineering. It is hard to believe that what started as a mutation is now considered a desired feature on many of the violets we grow! Now that we have the basics of how variegation on leaves originated, let's look at the types of variegation that you might see.

In the AVSA Handbook (page 15), variegation on leaves is described as leaves that in addition to shades of green, can be marked with white, cream, light yellow, or rosy shades from light pink to deep wine red. Two types of variegation are highlighted in the handbook. These are crown (Champion) variegation and mosaic (Lilian Jarrett) variegation, which refer to the pattern that the variegation appears on the leaf. Crown variegation appears on the crown area of the plant and spreads outwards to the tips of the leaf. One example of a plant with crown variegation is 'Country Romance' which is a semiminiature hybridized by Hortence Pittman. Mosaic variegation covers the entire leaf in a mottled, mosaic pattern. 'Midget Lilian' is a miniature that has mosaic variegation (hybridized by E. Champion).

Usually variegation is described according to the colors present on the leaf. In the Master Variety List for African violets, the description for the foliage of the miniature 'Pixie Pearl' is "variegated medium green/some cream". If the plant has crown or mosaic variegation, that feature is listed first. For example, the foliage on miniature 'Midget Silver Fox' is described as "mosaic variegated dark green and silver".

Another type of variegation I want to mention is the first named variegation, which is again is 'Tommie Lou'. Tommie Lou variegation is defined in Joan Halford's book "Growing African Violets in Southern Africa" as a gentle feathering of white to the outer edges of the leaves which increases towards the crown leaves (page 88). An example of a plant with Tommie Lou variegation is the semiminiature 'Rob's Macho Devil'. You will often find this foliage simply described as TL variegation.

An exciting new type of variegated foliage is seen in Dr. Ralph Robinson's "Rob's Lucky" series of plants. There is 'Rob's Lucky Penny', 'Rob's Lucky Charm,' and 'Rob's Lucky Ducky'. In communicating with Ralph, I asked him how he describes the new type of variegation seen on these plants. He was very kind in sharing information to include in this column. Ralph explained that this is a "rare type of variegation that is totally unaffected by heat or age. Broad, irregular margins, much like "euonymus" (Any of various trees, shrubs, or woody vines of the genus *Euonymus,* many

species of which are cultivated for their decorative foliage). Propagated true only by sucker (leaves will produce an all-green plant)." He went on to refer to the variegation as a "chimera" type. It can not be passed along in its offspring. This variegation occurred by mutation and to quote Ralph, "I won't take credit for the mutations – it was lucky". It has taken years with many times of decrowning and rooting suckers to get a strain that produces plantlets stable enough to share with the public. This is why plants having this type of variegation are so rare and not sold commercially in large numbers.

Now that we have looked at the types of variegation, let's find out some of the possible ways to grow them with success. Although variegated miniatures and semiminiatures are not necessarily difficult to grow, they do require a bit more thought to their growing conditions in order to maintain variegation of the foliage. For the AVSC convention in May this year (2005 in Edmonton, Alberta), I had a lovely 'Rob's Bahama Mama' that I was planning to show. The blossoms were numerous and vibrant, the symmetry of the plant was great, and the leaves were a healthy green. When I checked on the First Class program to see what section and class that I would put 'Rob's Bahama Mama' in, imagine my shock at the description "crown variegated dark green and yellow". Needless to say, I did not enter this plant at the Canadian convention.

The first factor that I look at when a plant is to have variegated foliage and has all green leaves is the amount of nitrogen in the fertilizer being used. The three components of the fertilizer that violet growers use are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). When reading the fertilizer package and seeing the numbers 20-20-20, it means that the product contains 20 percent each of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Thus, a fertilizer with a high first number would be used to make the foliage greener and a lower first number would be used if you were trying to encourage variegation to show in the foliage. In trying to maintain variegation, I would look for a fertilizer with a low nitrogen number.

If the nitrogen level in the fertilizer is not the problem, I would next look at the temperature where the plant is being grown. Most variegated foliage plants seem to like cooler temperatures. It is a good idea to talk to the hybridizer or the grower when purchasing a variegated violet and find out what growing temperature has worked best for them. Since we have completed the basement in our home, the temperature in the plant room has greatly increased. We have tried to alleviate this with fans which circulate the air to other areas of the basement. Also, I grow most of my variegated minis and semiminis on the lower shelves of the plant stand. The temperature seems cooler closer to the floor. As with growing any mini or semiminiature violet (or any plant), sometimes trial and error are involved in trying to achieve variegated foliage. Have patience and don't make big changes all at once. Try a plant or two in a different location and see what happens first.

Briefly, I want to talk about repotting or putting down a leaf of a variegated plant.

Because variegated leaves show signs of shock by turning brown where there is variegation, you want to minimize the trauma to the plant as much as possible when you are repotting. Some ways to attempt to keep shock to a minimum are basically the same as you would with other violets. Repot variegated miniatures and semiminiatures when they are not freshly watered. Where possible, try the technique of mold potting to keep the roots intact. After you have repotted the plant, put it in a plastic bag or covered container to keep the humidity levels higher.

The technique for putting down a variegated leaf is the same as other violet leaves. I am not going to describe how to put down a variegated leaf but rather how to choose a variegated leaf to put down. One might think that you would choose the leaf with the most variegation to put down in order to get a plant that is variegated. This is not the case. When picking a leaf to use, you want to pick the one that has the most green on a variegated plant. This is because in order for the leaf to manufacture food so it can produce, it needs some chlorophyll (the green color). Using a heavily variegated leaf to put down usually results in the leaf turning brown, shriveling up, and dying.

I have a definite weakness for any variegated miniatures and semiminiatures I come across. I could list a whole page of favorites, but instead I will mention a few that are good to try if you are just starting to add variegates to your collection.

One of my first variegated plants was the miniature 'Wishful Teen'. The blossom is a lovely double bright pink, and the foliage is variegated dark green and white. I still have the variety, and the plant is easy to grow and does not seem to be affected by temperature. 'Rob's Gray Ghost' and 'Rob's Tweety Bird' are two more variegates that I have also been able to grow with relative ease. 'Rob's Gray Ghost' is a semimini with variegated dark black-green and white foliage and 'Rob's Tweety Bird' is also a semimini and has Tommie Lou variegated foliage. A newer plant in my collection is 'Country Romance'. I am enjoying this semiminiature which has crown variegation with medium green, cream, and pink. Give variegated miniatures and semiminiatures a try, and when they are not blooming or you are disbudding them, enjoy the beauty of the foliage.

Thanks to all who have written emails or letters recently. I appreciate all your comments and input. Winter may be right around the corner but I know that my violets are around the other corner to bring me months of cheer.

Take care and happy growing!

Constructing A Terrarium

by M. J. Tyler

1.) Select any clear glass or plastic container which does not have distorting properties. I prefer glass because it does not scratch as easily.

2.) Be sure it is REALLY clean. Windex works well. Dry thoroughly with a lint free cloth.

3.) Line the sides of the glass with green sheet moss to hide and contain the soil. It helps to moisten the moss to make it more flexible.

4.) Put in a layer of horticultural charcoal which will provide drainage and keep conditions "sweet." Add a piece of "Remay" or screening over the charcoal.

5.) Add any rocks or supports you are using to give the planting different levels. You may need to use some flower putty to hold things where you want them, or build up structures using hot glue, etc. You'd be surprised at the ways you discover to achieve your artistic objective! Pots, plastic glasses, margarine tubs, pieces of interesting wood and bark as well as rocks can be used. You may wish to construct a cave, a waterfall, or something inspired by the theme of the show. Anything goes that works and can be hidden or made to look naturalistic.

6.) Decide on the plants you will be using, either selecting from your collection, purchasing new, or begging from plant friends. Aim for using as much gesneriad material as possible. Sometimes you have to resort to non-gesneriads to achieve height in the rear. You can use some creeping plants like tiny ivies or mosses as ground covers and to smooth out contours and edges. Make sure everything is clean and pest free.

7.) Try out the placement of the plants. You will want to have tall items toward the back (or short items that have been given height by our support structures). Use plant placement to develop a pleasing rhythm, such as a winding path down a slope, a waterfall down to a mirror "lake", etc.

8.) Once you have a rough idea how things will work, place enough damp soil in the container to accommodate your planting. The soil should be very light, but perlite can be a distraction, so you may want to have a layer with perlite, then covered by a darker layer without it. Don't be afraid to push plants into crevices. If you have planned to use a blooming plant to be added at show time, as a focal point, sink an empty pot of the same size into the desired spot. Things can get messy during this stage, but don't worry about it while planting.

9.) Stand back and study your placement, etc. Re-adjust as necessary.

10.) Using a turkey baster or spray bottle with clear water, water the individual plants to settle them, then squirt water down the inside of the terrarium to clean the glass and add some water below the plants. Let this settle for a few hours.

11.) Carefully tip the terrarium to see if there is an excess of free water. You can either draw it up with a turkey baster or push a paper towel down to act as a wick.

12.) Cover the container and let it adjust in bright, indirect light such as a window or light stand. If moisture collects on the walls, wipe it off and leave the top off for a while. Once water balance is achieved this will not happen, and the plants will almost never need watering. Fertilizer will stimulate growth, so go easy with it!

13.) A balanced terrarium will be self-sufficient for many months, but there comes a time when the plants have grown out of bounds and you have to do some "editing" or completely start over. If you want to keep those plants in your collection, harden them off in a covered container and gradually get them used to new conditions.

From the *Newsletter* of the Toronto Gesneriad Society
Originally from *Gesneriad Soundings*

A Special Offer From Pat Hancock, Hybridizer of the "Buckeye" African Violets!

All African violet growers love spreading the hobby to others. What better way to encourage new growers than to tell them about membership in AVSA? Won't they appreciate all of the great information in the African Violet Magazine that will help them grow better plants?

If you have a friend who likes to grow violets, but has NEVER belonged to AVSA, Pat would like to send them 10 "Buckeye" leaves at NO COST, just for mentioning her name when joining AVSA.

OR - FOR THE HOLIDAYS ONLY - think about giving a GIFT SUBSCRIPTION to a friend, and Pat will send YOU 10 "Buckeye" leaves at NO COST!

In either case, send a copy of the letter you receive from AVSA and $6.00 postage to:

Pat's Patch
7132 Shurz Rd.
Middletown, OH 45042

"Buckeyes" are variegated Standard African violets.

Don't forget to mention Pat's name in your letter to AVSA!

This offer is good in the US ONLY.

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Ma's Moody Monday

New Cultivar 2006

Third Best New Cultivar

2005 AVSA National Show

Hybridized & Exhibited by: **Olive Ma Robinson**

PROPAGATING VIOLETS FROM LEAVES

by Marie Montague

Years ago when first setting violet leaves, I diagonally cut the stem (petiole) and placed it straight down in a pot. This was not wrong, but a friend suggested another way. Since he had great success with many new plants per leaf (8 or 9 in some pots) and, more importantly, lost very few leaves, I was willing to give his method a try. The following is his technique for "preparing a leaf" and my suggestions on caring for set leaves.

Preparing a Leaf

Select a healthy leaf with as long a stem as possible. Fill a (2 1/4") pot or a "Solo" cup (with drainage holes) almost to the top with wet soil. Place your leaf on the top of the pot and cut the stem, on the diagonal, to cover most of the pot. Very gently scrape the top of the stem, with your thumb. If you look closely at the stem it will look a little shiny or moist. Place the stem **on the top** of the soil, scraped side up, and lightly add a little soil to the top (approximately 1/8") to anchor the leaf in place. Water leaf with your favorite fertilizer (adding a little "Marathon" to treat for bugs will never hurt) and set aside so excess water will drain from pot (half hour or so.) I believe at this point the leaf bonds with soil. Label each pot with violet variety and perhaps date set.

When will you know if a leaf has actually set? Check your leaves after about a week by gently touching the leaf to see if there is resistance. If the leaf doesn't move, the leaf has set. If there is slight movement, add a little more soil.

Creating a Miniature Greenhouse

Set leaves like to be moist at all times, but never wet, and in the early stages keeping them warm is as important as moisture. Two methods work well in creating your own small greenhouse. Method one, which has been used for years with success, is to cover the leaf and pot with a sandwich bag (zip lock bags tip over) and secure it above the bottom of the pot with a small elastic band. Check occasionally to make sure leaf is still moist. When heavy condensation appears, remove the sandwich bag and turn it inside out. Water the leaf and place the bag over the leaf again. I still use this method when I receive a leaf that is a little "suspect."

The second method, which works if you are setting many leaves, is to place pots in a covered tray with matting (without sandwich bag). Commercial trays are available, but any plastic container with a clear cover will work well (plastic wrap can serve as a cover). Check periodically to make sure leaves are moist. I prefer to water each plant, but, if time is short, just wet matting. If sides or top of container appear very wet, wipe sides and top dry with a paper towel. This is critical because too much moisture will rot leaves. Water each plant.

How long does it take before new plants appear?

This is a difficult question. It depends on the variety that you are propagating and whether you are setting under lights or near a window. Some leaves take 6 months before you see anything and then perhaps only one or two new plants. Others seem to take off immediately, and the pot is filled with plants. As long as a leaf appears healthy, one must have patience. After plants appear, you might want to cut down the mother leaf, or remove entirely, to create more space on your trays.

When should new plants be potted up?

Every grower has their own opinion, and it is much a trial and error process at first. If in doubt, it's always best to give the plants extra time.

When one of the new plants looks large enough to pot up with many small plants around it, carefully remove the large plant and reposition the smaller plants in the same propagation pot to plant up at another time. The large plant can actually inhibit the growth of smaller plants in the same pot. At times, after removing plants, you will find that the mother leaf looks healthy. If this is a "special" leaf and not easily obtained, cut at the diagonal again and place back in the propagation pot with new soil.

Pot up to a 2 1/4" pot. This is a good time to add a wick and treat with "Marathon." Most of my plants go back to trays where they stay until they are ready to be potted up once again to a larger pot, or in the case of minis and semi-miniatures, moved to a clean pot and new soil. Separate plants you want to keep in your collection from those that you will sell. Do yourself a favor – toss plants you don't like.

Hybridizing African Violets is Fun

by Margaret Taylor

Hybridizing African violets is not only fun but full of surprises. Are you saying "Yes, but...," and having all kinds of reasons and excuses as to why it is not an option for you? I know, because I did this myself for many years until this "violetitis" took a different turn, and I ventured into the unknown. It is not necessary to have unlimited space or an in-depth knowledge of genetics. All it takes is an interest and a little patience.

Sometimes, without any interference from you, a plant will self-seed. This may occur because an insect has transferred some pollen to the stigma of a flower when it was receptive, and a pod has resulted. Or the stigma was perhaps deformed and grew into the anthers of its own flower, collecting pollen on its way.

There is no reason why you could not leave that pod until it was ripe and starting to shrivel, then harvest and sow. You would only know for sure the identity of the seed parent, not the pollen parent. If you need to know the identity of both parents, then it is simple to do the pollen transfer yourself. Ship off the anthers of the chosen "father", open the pollen sacs, and gently place a tiny spot of pollen onto the stigma of the "mother". It is recommended that you also remove the anthers of the seed parent and discard them.

It is important to label each cross and note names of parents (seed parent x pollen parent) and date of crossing. Do use a conspicuous form of labeling, or you may inadvertently nip off your forming pod when grooming. One important thing to remember is that variegated seedlings will only result from a cross using the variegated parent as a seed parent.

Successful cross-pollination makes itself evident after a week or so. The flower will shrivel, and the ovary will enlarge and continue to grow. Do not overwater or allow the plant to dry out while it is carrying seed. Keep growing conditions to their preferred levels if you possibly can.

In upwards of four months, usually, the seed will start to wither. Snip it off and allow it to dry out for two weeks or more before sowing. Snip open the pod and shake the seed very carefully onto a piece of white paper creased down the middle. A suitable container can be prepared, shallow and wide rather than narrow and deep. A fine seed-raising mix should be used without fertilizer content, dampened and given about one minute in the microwave. Cool thoroughly before sowing your seed as sparsely as possible. It is not necessary to sow all the seed in the first instance. It can be stored in screw top jar in the refrigerator for up to five years (I am told, but haven't personally proved this one).

Seed can be settled with a fine spray of tepid water but should not be covered with mix. Cover the container with plastic wrap, place in a warm spot close to a light source, and wait. 75 °F is the preferred temperature, so it may be disappointing if seed is put down in cooler conditions. In about fourteen days, remove the plastic wrap and inspect. No seeds up yet? Not to worry, some take longer. Replace the plastic wrap and look again in a few days.

It is very exciting when seed does start to emerge. Later, when seedlings have grown and reached a comfortable size, they may be pricked out into individual tiny containers or into community trays. It is a good idea to cover once again until they establish and then harden off gradually.

Very soon the foliar characteristics of the parent plants will become evident. Some, of course, better than others. The real fun begins when flower buds start to emerge. Some flowers will be droppers, others nondescript or deformed. They can be discarded early, leaving room for others to grow. Scant fertilizing, plus a little mild foliar feeding is all that is necessary.

You must be careful not to get too sentimentally attached to your "babies" because you are looking for one or two really special hybrids, not an army of "also rans".

Whatever your preconceived expectation of flower colors and characteristics, there is always an element of surprise. To qualify for naming and registration, a hybrid must have proved itself to be stable through three generations from leaf cuttings. It IS worth the wait.

One day you may experience the joy of seeing your own hybrids run away with the awards at meetings and shows. Now, what could be more satisfying to an African violet grower?

From *African Violet News*, Official Journal of the AV-Gesneriad Society of NSW, Inc.

IN MEMORY - DORIS R. WEAVER

Doris R. Weaver, age 85 of Stockton, CA, passed away on August 12, 2005. She was born in Visalia, CA and was a resident of Stockton for 48 years. She was a Senior African Violet Judge and Master Gesneriad Judge.

Doris was a Charter Member and past president of Delta Gesneriad and African Violet Society. She was also a member of long standing of the San Joaquin African Violet Society and held all offices there.

She was also a member of the American Kennel Club where she raised champion Pomeranians and was active in the American Cancer Society Outreach and enjoyed bowling.

Doris left a large footprint and she will be missed by all who knew her and she was my very dear friend and convention companion for over twenty years.

Showcase

Satin Bow

Exhibited by:
Catherine R. Thompson
Hybridized by: **M. Burns**
Standard

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Mary Craig

Exhibited by: **Anne Thomas**
From Best AVSA Collection
2005 National Show
Hybridized by: **R. Nadeau**
Large

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Von's Mariner / Rob's Boogie Woogie ACA's Libbie

Exhibited by: **Doris Brownlie**

TOO MUCH LIGHT?

by C. A. Cromer
821 El Avado Avenue • Lincoln, NE 68504

Much has been written about the importance of supplemental light for African violets. In fact, much of the popularity enjoyed by African violets can be credited to the development of the fluorescent light. When I started growing them over 25 years ago, it was made clear that fluorescent lights were a must for growing attractive plants.

We had programs on lighting, tubes, automatic timers, etc., in our local club, the Lincoln, Nebraska, African Violet Society, and we conducted experiments to see if the results of light variations agreed with recommendations from others.

When I constructed shelves for our violet collection, I followed every recommendation I could find at the time. The resulting stands were quite satisfactory. Through controlled lighting, it was possible to achieve a compact, symmetrical plant with good bloom.

Over a period of years, however, I noticed that certain varieties did not respond well to my growing conditions. Other members of our club were having the same problem. I noticed certain varieties did not do well under the growing conditions in our area, and we let it go at that.

During discussions on soil mix, water type, fertilizer, pH, temperature, etc., certain plants would be identified as poor performers. When we made out our lists of 25 favorite plants each year, there was not much thought given to why certain plants grew better than others. We always knew that each violet variety had varying tolerances to the different conditions of each grower, but we were not sure why.

I seemed to have more trouble from tight centers in certain varieties, together with considerable brittleness and distorted growth of new leaves which were growing from the crown of some plants. There would be an excess of more leaves started than the plant needed. Center tightness could be alleviated somewhat by thinning unneeded leaves so the blossoms could come through. It was also noticed that when these plants were placed in the outside rows on the shelf toward the end, the tight center problem was reduced. Another indicator of excessive light among other varieties was yellow blotching on the outer leaves, which was mistakenly identified as fertilizer burn.

One of the valuable experiences a club member can derive is the opportunity to talk things over with others. In the occurrence of problems, each grower develops theories about the causes, and it is important to get other members to react.

My conclusion is that in developing an African violet collection, a grower must give consideration to the light tolerance among varieties showing stress during the growing process.

Other indications of too much light might include extreme flatness of the leaves, dull foliage, retarded growth, increased suckering, blossoms under the leaves, shortened petioles, and increased mutation or reverting of fantasy varieties. Quite possibly there are other symptoms.

Correcting over-lighting can be done in a number of ways. The most apparent would be to increase the distance between the light source and the plants. However, with the fixed shelves which most of us have, another option must be sought.

A very important step is early identification. Plants showing light stress should be moved to the outside rows and toward the end of the shelf. Once one becomes aware of those plants which are light sensitive, they can be moved to the perimeter of the shelf. We have always been told that variegated plants need more light, so they should be placed in the center. My experience is that this may be true for most, but not for all variegates. I have tried grouping the light sensitive varieties on one shelf and cutting down the timer for that shelf by an hour or two. Since I have several shelves on a timer, I am restricted to some extent on this practice. I am even experimenting with natural lighting during a part of the growth process and have had some encouraging results, at least in part. Perhaps with better planning and management, regulating the time could be a more effective practice.

There are other tactics which I find to be quite helpful. I do a lot of rearranging plants on a shelf and from shelf to shelf. We have always been told that violets on the outside row of the shelf need to be rotated toward the light, but changing position on the shelf is also a good practice.

I am changing to the 25 watt tubes for some shelves. I am assuming that if a 40 watt cool white tube produces 31.00 lumens, then by proportion, a 25 watt cool white tube would produce about 1900 lumens. Alternating one cool white tube and a Growlux tube in the same fixture will reduce tight centers, but is much more costly. I have been advised

by a lighting specialist not to use a 25 watt and a 40 watt tube in the same fixture because it will shorten the life of the ballast. I am aware that different wattage tubes in the same fixture will work, but I am unsure about the long term effect.

Excessive lighting is a topic which has not been addressed to any great extent in violet literature. My best estimate is that light stress is a factor in growing about one-third of the violets in my collection, some of those to a greater or lesser extent. One of our club members said that her way of coping with the problem of poor performance was just to dump those varieties which didn't respond well in her growing conditions. I find, though, there is a satisfaction in growing a variety better than I ever have before. I think recognizing the light tolerance for each cultivar and making necessary adjustments according to the growth indications will contribute to growing a better plant.

I will appreciate hearing from growers who have noticed light stress for certain African violet varieties during the growing process. Have others had this same experience? Are there other ways to deal with this problem?

Coming Events Deadlines

January/February AVM - November 1
March/April AVM - January 1
May/June AVM - March 1
July/August AVM - May 1
September/October AVM - July 1
November/December AVM - September 1

All events notices must be in writing.
Submit by Email <rrumsey@earthlink.net>.
Fax: 409.839.4329 or US Postal Service: AVSA Coming Events
2375 North St., Beaumont, TX 77702

Membership Application

Application for Membership Recommended by _____ **Mem. #** _____
The African Violet Society of America, Inc.
2375 North Street, Beaumont, TX 77702 **Date** _____

Membership runs one year from date paid and includes 6 issues of the AFRICAN VIOLET Magazine.

- ❑ Individual Membership USA ($25.00)
- ❑ Associate Member USA ($10.00-no magazine, must reside at same address as a person having any other class of membership)
- ❑ International Membership ($27.50)
- ❑ International Associate ($11.50-no magazine, must reside at same address as a person having any other class of membership)
- ❑ Commercial USA ($37.00)
- ❑ Commercial International ($38.75)
- ❑ Affiliated Chapter USA ($27.00)
- ❑ Affiliated Chapter International ($29.50)
- ❑ Affiliated State, Regional and Council ($27.00)
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❑ New Member ❑ Renewal Mem. # _____

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ORGANIZE YOUR GROWING AREA

by Mary Ann Switzer • Chesterfield, MO

My violet room didn't start out organized. It has been a thirty year work in progress. When your work space is organized, it is a pleasure to work in. You can get a lot of work done when only a small amount of time is available.

My basement violet room measures 10 feet by 11 feet. I have three plant stands, each with three 48" lighted shelves. I also have two narrow bookcases, a steel shelf unit for pots, a metal cabinet with shelves for supplies, a potting bench and chair. In addition, I have a waste basket, 4 five-gallon buckets of soil mix, 4 stacking bins for soil ingredients, and 6 one-gallon jugs of fertilizer water. It doesn't appear crowded because it is organized.

Potting bench with cans to hold tools.

The work surface is a potting bench which I built twenty-five years ago when I had a brief flirtation with woodworking as a hobby. Previously, my work surface was a cardboard packing box turned upside down. Maybe your work surface is a card table in the corner of your basement. What is important is that all of your tools are easy to reach and easy to put away. On my potting bench, I have cans which contain pens and pencils, knives, brushes, grooming tools, scissors, and miscellaneous tools. These cans originally contained teabags from Republic of Tea and soft drink mix from Crystal Light. I covered them with Contact-Brand adhesive paper which I found in a dark green color. Each can is labeled. I use a Brother P-touch label maker. This was purchased at an office supply store. I also use it to label my pots with plant names. It is a great gadget and you will find many uses for it all around the house.

The most important practice to learn is to put all tools away when you are finished working. This means even when you are just going upstairs for lunch. You never know, something might come up and you won't get back down to the basement that afternoon. If you train yourself to put everything away, eventually it becomes so routine that you don't even think about it.

Storage cabinet, steel shelf unit, and 5-gallon buckets.

I have a utility sink in the basement. When my work session is over, I put all dirty reservoirs in the sink, give them a squirt of dish detergent, and fill them with hot water. Their lids go in a small bucket with a squirt of dish detergent and hot water. Any dirty pots are put in a 5 gallon bucket with a generous squirt of dish detergent, a cup of white vinegar, and are then covered with hot water. The vinegar helps to dissolve any dried-on fertilizer salts. Buy gallon jugs of white vinegar at the grocery store. The price per ounce is economical, and the jugs are good for holding fertilizer water. At the beginning of my next work session, I empty the buckets, wipe out the reservoirs, their lids, and the pots with a sponge, rinse them, and place them in a dish drain to dry. This is not a big task if done on a regular basis. It is only when you let mountains of dirty pots and reservoirs accumulate that you get in trouble.

When my children were growing up, their playroom was in the room adjacent to my violet room. That is when I bought the metal cabinet with shelves to store all my fertilizers, pesticides, and knives. The cabinet was locked with a combination padlock. Now that the chil-

Bins for soil ingredients, bookcases in background.

dren are grown, the lock isn't needed. I still use the cabinet for storage. It has an additional use. On its front and side, I use magnetic hooks to display my show award rosettes. I urge anyone with children, grandchildren, or pets in the home to lock up any dangerous substances or tools. Just putting things on a high shelf is not good enough.

Years ago I bought four storage bins which can stack one on top of the other. I use them to store perlite, vermiculite, peat moss, and commercial potting mix. They each hold several bags and take up very little space. The steel shelf unit that I use to hold pots was inexpensive and simple to assemble. Having pots of many different sizes all within arm's reach sure makes repotting easy. After I mix my favorite soil recipes, I store the mixes in 5-gallon buckets. These are very inexpensive and can be found at hardware stores. I bought Bucket Seat lids made by Bucket Boss for them that also serve as seat cushions, very handy when pulled up to a shelf. Grooming and watering plants becomes very comfortable.

I urge you to organize your growing area. Your time will be better used. My violet growing hobby has brought me untold hours of enjoyment over the years. My violet room is my place of escape from the world. I hope each of you has found such a place to indulge your passion for growing.

AFFILIATE UPDATE

Bev Promersberger - *Affiliate Committee*
7992 Otis Way, Pensacola, FL 32506
Email: Promers22@hotmail.com

Welcome to new affiliates in Colorado, Florida and Russia:

Mile High Violet Society
Second Saturday each month, 1:00 p.m.
President: Trudy Brekel
14442 Garfield Street, Brighton, CO 80602
brekel@earthlink.net

Bloomin' Violets & Gesneriads of Palm Beach
Third Saturday each month, 10:00 a.m.
Parkview Villas Clubhouse,
2400 Lake Osborne Drive, Lake Worth, FL 33461
President: Martha Spyridon
3548 Ensign Circle, Delray Beach, FL 33483

Fialochka
President: Lubov Telnih
43 Katukova Street, Apt 23, Lipetsk, Russia 398036
fialka.telnih@lipetsk.ru

Fialki na Murmane
President: Elena Aleksandrova
PO Box 3, Mondhegorsk, Murmanskaya oblast
Russia 184506
Alexia@yandes.ru

Nevskaya Fialka
President: Irina Kabanova
40 Korablestroiteley Street, korpus 5, apt 57
St. Petersburg 199155 Russia
Konti@bk.ru

There are new clubs forming in Florida and Oklahoma. Perhaps one is near you:

DeBary, Florida
Contact: John Wilson
114 Pine Valley Court, DeBary, FL 32713
(386) 753-0895
Cagmo@comcast.net

Gainesville/Lake City Area, Alachua/Columbia counties
Contact: Joanna Young
(386) 264-3764
jyoung@actcfl.org

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Contact: Linda Bridges
(405) 691-1469
Lyndo@cox.net

AVSA Building Maintenance Fund

Susan Hapner • 35 Ridge Point Dr. • Chesterfield, MO. 63017
Email: hapnersb@aol.com

Donations Received – 1 June to 31 July, 2005

JULY

Armand Arata	$25.00
In memory of Gregory Tatarian	
Joanne Baker-Pruner	3.00
Susan J. Fraley	10.00
Linda Garramone	10.00
Betty Grundy	$5.00
Marvin K. Nester	5.00
Dorothy Ida Peterson	5.00
First AVS of Wichita Falls, TX	25.00
In honor of Sue Ramser	
Totals	**$88.00**

Question Box

Sue Haffner
3015 Timmy Ave.
Clovis, CA 93612
Email: sueh@csufresno.edu

Hello, violet friends. I hope you and your violets are all doing well. My own violets managed to survive the summer, despite my several extended absences from home. A friend says, "Violets are so forgiving." In my previous column, one question concerned two violets that had leaves that just wouldn't lie down, no matter where they were moved, not matter what kind of light they had, how much room to flatten out, etc. The person who posed the question has gotten back to me to say that the violets are 'Simpler Times' and 'Super Duper'. (And, no, they are still not lying down!) I am not familiar with these two varieties. Has anyone else had a similar experience with either of these?

QUESTION: *I started an African violet in water from a leaf cutting. After the plant had grown, I noticed that there were two plants and separated them. One of the plants was the same as the original and the other was different. Is this to be expected? I have read that plants started from a leaf are not always true to the original plant. I do not know the name of the original plant, as it was purchased before I started keeping records. The blossoms are very large and pink.*

Answer: After further communication, I found out that what the grower meant by "different" was that the two plantlets displayed varying blossom colors: one had solid pink flowers; the other had white flowers with "a streak of pink on the edge". This sounds like the sort of variation that pops up in hybrid violets – sometimes more often than we would wish. Sometimes the sport is temporary. If you like the white, pink-edged flowers, keep growing the plant and see if it continues to show those same characteristics. Perhaps it will revert to solid pink. It's true that, in hybrids, vegetative propagation from leaves or cuttings may produce a plant that is not always true to the original. In species plants, however, vegetative offspring are genetically identical to the mother (except in the case of random mutations, but that's another story ...).

QUESTION: *I would appreciate any help you can give me to try and get my soil from pH 6.8 or 7.0 to around 6.5. I have tried aspirin, vinegar, and liquid iron with no results. Could it be that the peat moss is old?*

Answer: You don't say how your plants are growing. Do they display evidence that their soil chemistry is "off"? The best way to change that is to repot into fresh potting mix. You also don't say what you use as a potting mix, but it presumably contains peat moss, since you mention that. Yes, peat moss is well known for breaking down over time – but getting more acid, not less. I'm not sure, also, what you are measuring to get your pH reading. Your tap water? Most municipal tap water is adjusted and buffered to a particular pH and is quite resistant to change. When I had been growing violets for a few years, I got obsessed with pH and how to change it. Since receiving a lecture from a friend with a degree in chemistry, I have decided it is pretty well futile for us to worry about that. True pH levels are difficult to measure accurately outside of a laboratory. The components of tap water that can be inimical to good plant growth are mineral salts. These can be alleviated somewhat by filtering. A former member of my club had dramatically improved plants after he started using water from a reverse osmosis system. There are other means of filtering tap water that you might try, if mineral salts are a problem. But I would recommend first that you repot and see how your plants react.

QUESTION: *I love violets and gesneriads and can't resist adding more plants to my collection. So, of course, I have <u>way</u> too many plants, and I don't get around to policing up my light shelves like I should. I was disgusted to find a colony of mealy bugs had established themselves in the back of one tray. They are even plastered over the outside of some pots and up under the rims. Yuck! Do I need to throw away those pots? I'm kind of embarrassed about letting things get so out of hand. Please don't use my name!*

Answer: Okay, "Please-don't-use-my-name". An infes-

tation of mealy bugs, or any other pest, requires clean up of everything in the area. Take out all the trays on the shelf and inspect the plants. Put capillary mats in the washer; scrub down the pots and shelves. It's amazing how mealy bugs can burrow themselves into wooden shelves. As to whether you need to discard the pots: that's up to you. If the pots are old, stained, marked with the remains of old plant identifications (sounds like I'm describing my own), you might want to pitch them. But if they're fairly new, a hard-to-get size, or one of the great old ones with the rolled edges, you can clean them up. First, soak them in bleach water, then wash in hot, soapy water. Some people run them through the dishwasher. A Swedish pen pal used to do all that and then put the pots out in winter to freeze. Freezing will kill any leftover insect eggs that might have survived the previous treatments. Some people use pebbles in humidity trays. Don't ignore cleaning these. The bugs can live just about anywhere. Boil the pebbles for ten minutes or so. Wipe down fixtures and tubes. This sounds like a lot of work, but did you know that male mealy bugs can fly? Yuck, indeed!

QUESTION: *I had been keeping my violets enclosed in plastic bags over the summer while I was moving. I guess I kept them in the bags too long, as some of the plants have lost their centers. What would cause that?*

Answer: I'm trying to visualize a violet without a center. All I can suggest is that the plastic bags provided a too generous environment. Under conditions of very high humidity, plants can produce axial root growth, and all the plant's energy may go into that, rather than to the main growing point. It sounds like you will have to start the plants over. Sorry if my response sounds tentative, but I've never heard of this happening before.

QUESTION: *I went on a three-day repotting spree, potting up almost a hundred baby violets. While I was at it, I repotted a big plant of 'Tiger'. I was using my regular potting mix. The baby plants are all doing fine, but 'Tiger' seemed to collapse almost overnight. It breaks my heart. I don't want to lose my plant.*

Answer: The grower sent along an email photo of her poor 'Tiger' with its center leaves stunted and discolored. It might have suffered some kind of physical or chemical shock at repotting time. She didn't state whether or not she removed any of the root ball and/or leaves when she repotted. Obviously the repotting worked for the young plants but not for the mature one. A number of different variables could be involved, but the plant in the picture needed major rescue. All I can suggest is cutting out the center and hoping for normal offsets that can then be detached and potted up; that, or taking leaves and discarding the old plant. Let me know how it turns out.

QUESTION: *I love Streptocarpus; I think the flowers are so beautiful. But I can't grow them worth a darn. They are just "annuals" for me, with our hot, dry summers. While over on the coast (the grower is in California), they grow wonderful streps without too much effort. Can you suggest any strategies I can use to be more successful with these plants in my area?*

Answer: I agree with you: streps are beautiful. They don't grow well in the central San Joaquin Valley, where I live, either. If the plants grow well in coastal areas, what is it about the atmosphere there that might be a factor? Is it just cool temperatures? After all, most species of *Streptocarpus* are native to areas where the air temperature can get quite warm: the foliage and flowers are in the hot, moving air, but the roots are protected from the heat. Could that be at least part of the answer: keeping the roots cool? Roots are cooled by rapid evaporation of water most efficiently accomplished by growing the plants in clay pots. We all know that clay pots allow the roots to "breathe". Moving air brings about increased transpiration of moisture from the leaves. The combination of these two conditions serves to cool the plant. Of course, this also means that the pots would dry out very fast, so anyone using this technique has to be vigilant to keep the plants watered. Perhaps putting the clay pots in deep saucers and watering from below would help. We so often forget about plant roots – out of sight, out of mind – but their health is vital for good growth. Anyway, I haven't tried the above technique myself, but I intend to give it a try. (I have to give credit to Bob Baker in the June 2005 issue of the "City Lights" newsletter for comments on strep culture.)

QUESTION: *I've been corresponding by email with a violet grower overseas, and she would like to exchange leaves. I've never sent any plant materials out of the country and wonder what the regulations are.*

Answer: It's been a long time, but I used to exchange leaves with a grower in Sweden. She sent first, using a lidded Styrofoam box. After that, we re-used the box over and over. Select a nice colored leaf, green or a variegated leaf with as much green in it as possible. Break or cut the leaf and leave the stem long enough so that whoever receives it may cut again if they wish. Wrap the ends with wet tissue and cover with foil. You can then place each leaf in a plastic bag, unless heat might be a problem. Or, you could tape the leaves to the inside of a foam meat tray and attach another tray over it, kind of like a "clamshell". The mailing container should be sturdy, be packed securely, wrapped, and sealed. Remember that the package will go via air mail so be sure it is insulated. You have to fill out a green customs form. So you will need to visit the post office. In the area for description of contents write "Cut African violet leaves; no soil; no commercial value". That should be good enough. In any such exchange as this, it is incumbent upon the participants to be aware of any regulations of his or her country. While U.S. regulations are currently under study, I believe these non-commercial, hobby exchanges are still

permitted. I have sent a lot of seed packages to foreign countries as part of a job I do for another horticultural organization, and I have only ever had one country reject the package: Iran. Good luck with your project!

QUESTION: *What causes leaves on my violets to curl downward slightly? These plants are on a rather cool place on a windowsill. Could the temperature be the culprit?*

Answer: There are various reasons why violet leaves cup or curl downward: light, temperature, or pests. As for light, you didn't mention which direction the window faces. If it faces south or west, the location may have light that is too intense for the plant. Note if the foliage seems to be getting a bit bleached looking. That is a clue that the plant should be moved to a different window. Also, you didn't say what you mean by "cool". If the windowsill temperature does not go below 65 degrees, I don't think the temperature is to blame. However, if there are drafts around the window during chilly weather, your violets might react to them, so it would be prudent to move them then. Downward curling leaves can also be a symptom of that nasty pest, broad mites. Usually, though, an infested plant will also be displaying other symptoms, such as damaged centers and growth showing a bronzy coloration. These mites are almost microscopic, and can only be seen with a 10-power magnifier (or stronger). Badly infested plants should be discarded.

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: African Violet Magazine	2. Publication Number: 0 0 - 9 0 2 0	3. Filing Date: 10-15-05
4. Issue Frequency: Bi-monthly	5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6	6. Annual Subscription Price: $25.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer): 2375 North St. (Jefferson) Texas 77702-1722		Contact Person: Jenny Daugereau; Telephone: (409) 839-4725
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): 2375 North St. (Jefferson) Texas 77702-1722		

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)

Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): African Violet Society of America, Inc. 2375 North St. Beaumont, TX 77702-1722

Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Ruth Rumsey 2375 North St. Beaumont, TX 77702-1722

Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Not Applicable

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
African Violet Society of America, Inc.	2375 North St., Beaumont, TX 77702-1722

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities. If none, check box: ☑ None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
☑ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title: African Violet Magazine	14. Issue Date For Circulation Data Below	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)	7000	6500
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation (1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541. (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	6183	5892
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541. (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	15	12
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid USPS Mail Distribution	150	150
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	11	5
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b. (1), (2), (3), and (4))	6359	6059
d. Free Distribution by Mail (Samples, complimentary, and other free) (1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	10	10
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541		
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS		
e. Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)		
f. Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15d. and 15e.)	0	0
g. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c. and 15f)	10	10
h. Copies not Distributed	6399	6069
i. Total (Sum of 15g. and h.)	601	431
j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c. divided by 15g. times 100)	7000	6500
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership	100	100

☑ Publication required. Will be printed in the Nov. 2005 issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Jenny Daugereau — Date: 10/15/05

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

PS Form 3526, October 1999

Russian Hybrids to Be Registered

As you will notice in the convention show schedule in the January issue, there is a new Russian hybrids collection in the show. As of right now, there are no registered Russian hybrids, but applications are being processed, and they will be listed in the "Registration Report" column in this magazine before the convention. For your information, we have posted the names of the plants being registered at www.avsa.org22/Russian/Varieties/Registered.html.

Joe Bruns
Chairman, Plant Registration and
Master Plant List Committee

Happy Holidays

AVSA's BEST VARIETY LIST FOR 2005

Floyd Lawson, 20719 Madrona Av., Torrance, CA 90503
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Welcome to AVSA's 2005 Best Variety List. Thank you to all who participated by regular mail and e-mail. The response spanned the world. Even though I cannot answer each one, your comments and support are deeply appreciated.

Again this year, we list each of the top twenty-five (26 because of a tie) favorites with their descriptions from AVSA's First Class computer data base. Also included are the 14 top vote getters after the Best 25. Many have asked about species and the list. Yes, they are counted. The top species this year was ***S. ionantha* (S 5)** 1893 (H. Wendland). Now to YOUR choices for the past year! Read the list, read the descriptions, and choose a new favorite for your collection.

Irish Flirt (7577) 11/07/1991 (S. Sorano) Double bright green and white frilled star. Medium green, wavy. Semiminiature

Ness' Crinkle Blue (8136) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Double dark blue star/thin white edge. Dark green, quilted, serrated/red back. Semiminiature

Rainbow's Quiet Riot (R. Wasmund) Semidouble blue-purple large star/white fantasy. Dark green, round, scalloped. Standard

Frozen in Time (9167) 02/03/2003 (Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses/Sorano) Single-semidouble white star/green edge. Variegated light green and ivory, quilted. Standard

Picasso (6924) 10/04/1988 (M. Tremblay) Double light blue/white fantasy. Variegated medium green, plain/silver-green back. Large

Granger's Wonderland (3419) 05/01/1978 (Eyerdom) Semidouble light blue frilled. Plain, ruffled. Large

The Alps (7813) 10/03/1992 (K. Horikoshi/H. Sawara) Single-semidouble chimera white pansy/light blue stripe. Medium green, plain, quilted. Standard

Harbor Blue (6174) 02/24/1986 (T. Weber) Single light blue/darker eye. Dark green, plain/red back. Large

Orchard's Bumble Magnet (8479) 08/21/1996 (R. Wilson) Double pink star. Medium green, plain, pointed. Miniature

Rebel's Splatter Kake (8695) 01/31/1998 (R. Bann) Single-semidouble pink large fluted star/darker eye, purple fantasy, white-green edge. Medium green, spooned, quilted, glossy, serrated/red back. Large

Blue Dragon (S. Sorano) Semidouble-double pale blue large frilled star/darker eye, red-purple band, variable green edge. Dark green. Large

Ode to Beauty (7677) 02/28/1992 (G. Cox/B. Johnson) Semidouble medium coral star/thin raspberry band, white edge. Dark green, plain, quilted. Large

Tiger (3433) 06/01/1978 (I. Fredette) Semidouble dark blue-violet. Variegated. Large

Pixie Blue (2598) 09/16/1974 (L. Lyon) Single purple-blue/darker center. Plain, ovate. Miniature trailer

Milky Way Trail (7169) 08/01/1989 (J. Stahl) Single-semidouble white pansy. Medium green, heart-shaped, quilted. Semiminiature trailer

Powwow (7708) 06/15/1992 (K. Stork) Semidouble red pansy. Variegated green and cream, plain. Standard

Aca's Red Ember (8732) 06/29/1998 (J. Brownlie) Single-semidouble red sticktite pansy. Variegated medium green and white, plain. Standard

Optimara Rose Quartz (6969) 11/19/1988 (Holtkamp) Single-semidouble pink. Medium green, ovate, pointed, glossy, hairy. Miniature

Frosted Whisper (7198) 10/07/1989 (R. Scott) Single white sticktite star/white sparkle overlay. Variegated medium green, quilted, frilled. Large

Rob's Sticky Wicket (6467) 01/27/1987 (R. Robinson) Semidouble light fuchsia. Medium green, pointed. Semiminiature trailer

Tomahawk (7269) 01/22/1990 (K. Stork) Semidouble-double bright red. Dark green, plain. Large

Precious Pink (6025) 07/05/1985 (H. Pittman) Semidouble pink. Variegated, plain. Semiminiature

Cherokee Trail (5234) 04/09/1983 (L. Ray) Double pink/white edge. Variegated white and green, pointed. Standard trailer

B-Man's Etna (B. Curcuruto) Single medium pink ruffled pansy/purple fantasy. Medium green, spooned, quilted, ruffled. Standard

Wrangler's Dixie Celebration (4490) 06/29/1981 (W. Smith) Double pink. Variegated, quilted. Large

Ness' Satin Rose (8144) 01/19/1995 (D. Ness) Double rose-mauve two-tone star. Dark green, quilted, scalloped/red back. Semiminiature

Runners-up: Concord, Bob Serbin, Everdina, Optimara Hawaii, Optimara Little Hopi, Fisherman's Paradise, Marching Band, Ness' Orange Pekoe, Aca's Summer Parfait, Nortex's Snowkist Haven, Mickey Mouse, Optimara Ontario, Apache Brave, Melodie Kimi.

A Family Portrait

Georgene Albrecht
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How nice to be able to replace many of my favorite episcias at convention in Cincinnati! *Episcia lilacina* 'Blue Nile' (eh-PISH-ee-ah lie-LAH-sigh-nah) is just breath-taking. The flowers are huge, light violet-blue and have delicate fringe on all petals. The flowers on mine are more than an inch wide and three inches long and the blooms just lay on the foliage below. The foliage is brownish-green with a bright green center. Each leaf node produces at least two blooms.

***Episcia lilacina* 'Blue Nile'**

This plant loves humidity and just a little fertilizer. The more light, the more blooms it will have. If the roots dry out just once, they are damaged. This variety is available from Belisle's, P.O. Box 111, Radisson, WI 54867. I noticed that at convention many vendors sell *Episcia* plants. Please support our commercials. I just read the AVM and noticed JoS Violets had episcias available, too.

GENEROSITY

Most of you know that I lost a lot of my African violets to pythium this last year. Imagine my delight when a lady called me to say she had extra plants that needed a good home. Her name is Mary Martin, and she moved from her home to an assisted care facility. She has her violet collection with her on two large plant stands and two perfect windows. She ordered fifty leaves from Pat Hancock so she could have a great winter project.

Mary has cancer, but her plants help her "hold her own" as well as she can at age 90. Her plants are just beautiful, and she enjoys watching the blooms open. Her daughter gave me the extra plants, and would you believe, most of them were varieties that I lost! I could not believe it. Many were the Buckeye series, including 'Leprechaun Charm', and there was *S.* 'Tiger', and she even gave me a leaf of *S.* 'Firebird'. How wonderful!

They are thriving, and there were so many that they provided favors to our society picnic this July. Like me, Mary loves to watch those baby plants emerge from the mother leaf. And, the variety of leaves that Pat Hancock sent her is fantastic. Mary does have one very unusual plant she purchased years ago that has pink variegation and a yellow flower. I have never seen this before. Every time I go to visit her, I come home with more plants. She is so generous, and I can't thank her enough for helping fill my empty plant stands. She has lifted my spirits and filled my empty shelves with beauty.

Mary's mother, Isabella Klingler, grew African violets for many years, and Mary remembers buying a special Christmas gift for her. It was the first pink-blooming African violet. That must have been in the 1950's. Mary has been growing them for twenty-five years. She came to our show at the Galleria, and I gave her a stolen off my *Episcia* 'Cleopatra' plant on display. When I went to her apartment, there it was, big and happy in a lovely terrarium. Because I shared that one cutting, she shared all those extra plants with me. Is that Providence, or what? Thank you, Mary, you are a Godsend.

HABITAT

Valerie Pence, through the Cincinnati Zoo, has established an African Violet Conservation Fund. Tax deductible donations help restore and replant the forest which protects and shades species *Saintpaulia*. Firewood is the only energy available to the native people. We must help them develop tree nurseries and fuel-efficient stoves to conserve the forests.

Please, contact her at (513) 569-8228 or email valorie.pence@cincinnatizoo.org for more information.

SMILES

It was so nice to see so many miniature sinningias in the sales room at convention. Among the vendors, Dave's Violets even had the tiny *Sinningia pusilla* varieties. I have read on the internet that people wanted a source for these microminis. His address is: Dave's Violets, 1372 5. Kentwood, Springfield, MO 65804 or phone (417) 887-8904.

HOW DO PLANTS GROW?

1. Fertilizer

The plant produces sugars from carbon dioxide in the air, light energy, and water supplied by the grower. But for stem, leaf, and flower tissues to be formed, other elements are needed. These are supplied from the soil or by fertilizing, absorbed through the roots, and transported to where they can be used. If no nutrients are available, no growth occurs. That is why we use a fertilizer with a good balance of nutrients.

2. Light

The leaves of a plant are usually arranged to catch the most light. African violets with leaves in a flat whorl demonstrate this as they can utilize light from above and from the side. How does light help growth? Light causes the stomata (pores) in leaves to open, allowing carbon dioxide to enter and be used in food production by the process of photosynthesis. The three things used in photosynthesis are light energy, carbon dioxide, and water. Water escapes through the pores, so more water must be supplied to the plant, or the process cannot continue. The food produced can then be used in growth. Plants grown in the dark are weak and spindly with no healthy growth. Light and dark periods are essential for formation of flower buds and growth of flowers.

3. Temperature

Air temperature of 60 degrees F - 75 degrees F is ideal for healthy growth in African violets. It has also been found that the temperature of roots (i.e. soil or potting mix) affects growth of plants. Tropical plants don't grow (or very little) below 54 degrees F - 60 degrees F. Over 95 degrees F kills roots of many plants. African violets do not grow well when the temperature of the roots is below 60 degrees F or above 75 degrees F.

Other Factors Controlling Growth

If water, nutrients, and light are supplied in adequate quantities, what else controls growth? Hormones manufactured by the plant do this. Indole acetic acid (IAA) is produced in the shoot and gradually moves downward through the plant. It stimulates the growth of the apical shoot and retards lateral shoot (sideshoot) growth. In very low concentrations, it stimulates the formation of adventitious roots. These are roots which grow from stem tissue or cuttings -not other roots. A hint when putting down leaves is not to use hormone on the cut surface, as although it will stimulate new roots, shoot growth will be retarded. The leaf itself contains enough IAA to produce roots. However, when putting down a crown cutting, rooting hormone is helpful as a shoot is already present in the crown, and roots from the bare stem develop more quickly.

Growth of flowers is stimulated by a hormone called phytochrome which responds to certain light and dark periods sending chemical messages to axillary buds to change from side-shoots to flower buds. In some plants this only takes place at certain temperatures.

What does all this mean for us? We need to supply fertilizer, water, the best temperature and light, and let the plant do the rest! However, be careful in the use of hormones.

From the *Newsletter* of the Early Morn AV Group, Australia

AVSA Booster Fund

Shirley Berger • 4343 Schumacher Rd-196E • Sebring, FL 33872-2639

Contributions: June 1, 2005 – July 31, 2005

AV Club of Greater Kansas City, Missouri $50.00
In memory of Gayle Gill – A Club and AVSA member since 1976.
Desert Sun AVS, Carefree, AZ 25.00
AVS of Denver, Chapter 1, CO 20.00
John L Patterson, Hagerstown, MD 11.00
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Alien Foust, Orange, NJ 10.00
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Wade A. Nolan, Jacksonville, FL 5.00
Union County Chapter AVS, NJ 15.00
First AVS of Wichita Falls, TX 25.00
In honor of Sue Ramser, for all she does for the Club.
AVS of Rochester, NY 25.00
Wishing Bill Foster a speedy recovery
Central Jersey AVS, NJ 25.00
In lieu of speaker's fee: Jill Fischer
Frank Magdahl, Cuernavaca, Mor, Mexico $2.50
Mary S. Reifschneider, Lincoln, NE 500.00
Tatiana N. Kalgin, Moscow, Russia 50.00
Delta Gesneriad and AVS, Colfax, CA 100.00
In memory of Jo McCoy, from her friends in the Delta Gesneriad and AVS
Unpredictables AVS of Blue Springs, MO 10.00
Joyce and Kent Stork, Fremont, NE 20.00
In memory of our friend, Dorothy Townsend, of Australia

Total: $1006.00

"And the winners are ..."

Mary J. Corondan
7205 Dillon Court
Plano, TX 75024

FIRST HALIFAX AVS, NOVA SCOTIA – Winners: Best AVSA Collection: Blue Boy, Optimara Affection, Frozen in Time; Best Trailer: Rob's Sticky Wicket; Best Species: *Saintpaulia orbicularis* var. *purpurea*; Best Gesneriad: *Chirita* 'Aiko', **Ina Beaver.** Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Ness' Sno Fun, Bogeyman, Cool Blue; Best in Show/Best Semiminiature: Ness' Sno Fun; Best Miniature: Optimara Little Moonstone; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Anne Brown.** Best Design; Design Sweepstakes, **Audrey Moir.**

CINCINNATI AVS, OHIO – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: *Saintpaulia tongwensis, Saintpaulia grandifolia, Saintpaulia rupicola*; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Optimara Rose Quartz, Optimara Little Amethyst, Optimara Little Ruby; Best in Show/Best Standard: Harbor Blue; Best Semiminiature: Sugar Bear Blues; Best Miniature: Optimara Rose Quartz; Best Trailer/Best Species: *Saintpaulia magungensis*; Best Gesneriad: *Columnea* 'Light Prince'; Horticulture Sweepstakes; Design Sweepstakes, **Penny Wichman.** 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Omaha Thunder, Guelph's Dynamite; Optimara Florida II, **Karen Malott;** Best Design, **Doris Moran.**

GLENVIEW/NORTH SHORE AVS, IL – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Okie Easter Bunny, Wrangler's Jealous Heart, Rebel's Crested Robin; Best Standard: Okie Easter Bunny; Best Gesneriad: *Episcia* 'Strawberry Shortcake'; Best Design; Horticulture Sweepstakes; Design Sweepstakes, **Barbara Goodsell.** Best in Show/Best Semiminiature: Rob's Little Pueblo, **Jean Kern.** Best Miniature: Orchard's Bumble Magnet; Best Trailer: Rob's Lilli Pilli, **Beverly Larsen.**

ILLINOIS AVS, IL – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Chicago Flair, Optimara Monet, Rhapsodie Candy; 2nd Best Mini/Semi Collection: Super Boy, Classic Rock, Ness' Red Express; Best in Show/Best Standard: Peach Sundae, **Andrea Worrell.** 2nd Best AVSA Standard Collection: Aca's Red Ember, Silverglade Jewels, Rodeo Country; Best Trailer: Cirelda, **Adrienne Rieck.** Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Ness' Angel Eyes, Ness' Crinkle Blue, Ness' Satin Rose; Best Miniature: Ness' Angel Babe, **Dixie Williams.** Best Semiminiature: Bogeyman; Horticulture Sweepstakes; Design Sweepstakes, **Susan Andresen.** Best Species: *Saintpaulia rupicola*, **Patricia Owen.** Best Gesneriad: *Petrocosmea forrestii*, **Amy Cash-Allison.** Best Design, **Jackie Jones.**

SAINTPAULIA SOCIETY OF LONG ISLAND, NY – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Harbor Blue, Optimara Pennsylvania, East Wind; Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Shy Blue, White Dew, Pink Pussy Cat; Best in Show/Best Trailer: Ramblin' Spots; Best Standard: Harbor Blue; Best Semiminiature: Pink Pussy Cat; Best Miniature: Planet Kid; Best Species: *Saintpaulia ionantha*; Best Gesneriad: *Chirita* 'USBR'; Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Joseph Palagonia.** 2nd Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Rob's Puddy Cat, Little Pro, Classic Rock, **Donna Palagonia.** Best Design; Design Sweepstakes, **Carolyn Klein.**

TORONTO AVS, ONTARIO – Winners: Best AVSA Standard Collection: Apache Redcoats, Apache Freedom, Rebel's Midnight Mauve, **Lois McPherson.** Best AVSA Mini/Semi Collection: Beginner's Luck, Definitely Darryl, Plumberry Glow; Best Semiminiature: Plumberry Glow, **Doris Brownlie.** Best in Show: B-Man's Melila; Best Gesneriad: *Streptocarpus* 'Susie', **Olga Vertib.** Best Design, **Eleanor Elston.** Horticulture Sweepstakes, **Emma Bygott.**

Storing Seeds

by Stan Sudol

In the fall of last year, I went searching for glassine envelopes for seeds, like the ones available from the AGGS seed fund. We all like them. They are small, have easy access, and are transparent so we can see what is in them.

I took a trip to downtown Toronto and checked out several stamp collecting establishments. I took a sample of the envelope I was looking for, and no one claimed to have ever seen such an object! Scary.

They offered a Canadian alternative, much the same size and shape, but the opening looks exactly the same as a standard envelope. Since I thought that I had no other options, I purchased two packages.

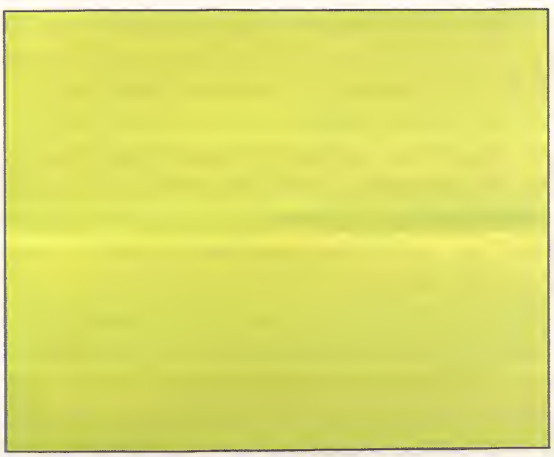
I also came across some removable labels that I could use on the computer. I print out two labels and put one on the front, like an address label, and the other on the back to seal the flap of the envelope. These labels can be handwritten as well, with a pen or pencil.

I have always liked the way Maryjane Evans prepared the seed packets I had ordered, and have tried to do the same when I harvest a crop.

The paper is a soft tissue paper that perhaps is used for wrapping cups or glassware at most stores. I don't get many gifts, but a sheet of this will go a long way! I have also seen some of this paper that looks as though it may be so transparent that there are actual holes in it, so beware!

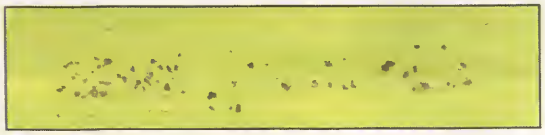
Cut the paper into small rectangles, about 3" (8 cm) wide by 2 1/2" (6.5 cm) high. I like it this size, as it is big enough for my clumsy fingers. Now, after cutting your papers, fold them in half on their longer side, put the seeds in, and fold it as demonstrated in the pictures below.

Taking pictures of transparent paper is not that easy. So, I have used a bright green sheet of paper to demonstrate.



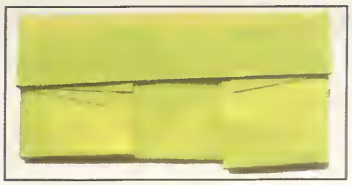
Actual size 8 cm (3 in.) x 6.5 cm (2 1/2 in.).

Add seed and clean out chaff.

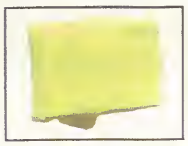


Spend some time cleaning out the chaff.

Fold up in half, and then fold L & R ends over.



Fold 1/2 down, and fold in half L to R.



A really tiny packet can contain a large number of seeds.

Place in envelope and label. Put it in a container and place in refrigerator.

From the Toronto Gesneriad Society *Newsletter*

In Search of New Violets

Dr. Jeff Smith
The Indiana Academy
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Email: JSmith4@bsu.edu

One of the colors seen in African violet flowers is not the result of a pigment at all. White flower color is due to a lack of having any pigment, not because there is a white pigment. When light hits the petals, none of the light is absorbed by a pigment. Since none of the light is absorbed, all of the light is reflected off the petals, and we see this as the color white. Sometimes the cells manage to produce pigment, often in response to temperature changes in the growing area. Flowers with Geneva edges and thumbprint patterns are notorious in changing the size of the white areas because of the temperature. I've also observed some plants described as having pure white flowers produce pink to red flowers when grown under different conditions. These changes in expression are not due to a change in the genetics; the plants have not mutated. Rather, the trait has responded to the environment and is being expressed differently. If your plants with white flowers are not blooming true to type, try growing them under different temperatures rather than throwing them out. Chances are, the white color will return when the plants are grown under more optimal conditions.

Q: *How would you suggest creating a semi-mini trailer with wasp foliage?*

A: I would suggest picking a strong semi-mini trailer that has your favorite combination of foliage and flowers to serve as one parent. The other parent should be a plant with wasp foliage. It doesn't matter which plant serves as the seed parent unless you want to have variegated foliage. In that case, it would probably be easier to have the variegation in the trailer parent as there are very few variegated wasp cultivars.

The F1 offspring will likely be mostly non-trailers and about half should have wasp foliage. Select one of the best F1 offspring with wasp foliage and backcross to the trailing parent. This should produce a certain percentage of trailing offspring, some of which should be semi-minis. About half of these offspring should show the wasp foliage. Therefore, the traits for wasp foliage, semi-mini size, and trailing should be combined together in a small percent of the offspring. Be sure to grow out a large number of offspring in the backcross in order to get a few plants of the desired combination.

Q: *I've seen pictures of plants that had flowers with smaller flowers inside the flower. Is it possible to breed for this trait?*

A: I doubt that you could breed for this trait, but it would be interesting to find out. The flower within a flower combination occurs when some of the stamens or the pistil develops into another whorl of flower parts. Since the sexual parts of the flower are involved with the mutation, the flowers are usually sterile. However, they might produce a small amount of viable pollen. If so, the pollen could be used in breeding trials to reproduce the mutation. Please let me know if you are successful in working with this trait.

Q: *Is it possible to produce a plant with a pink thumbprint on a blue background?*

A: Anything is possible, but I don't think this combination is very likely. The thumbprint pattern is a genetic dominant trait where the petal edges fail to make any pigment. Because there isn't any pigment, we see the petal edges as "white". The trait is temperature sensitive, and the width of the white area can be narrow or wide. Because the mutation is a result of no pigment being made in the petal edges, it will be very difficult to have a situation where the edges produce a dominant pigment (blue) and leave the center of the petals with a recessive color (pink). However, African violets are known to mutate, and someone may find a plant someday with some sort of new expression of thumbprint.

Q: What is the pigment that makes some variegated leaves appear brown?

A: By "appearing brown", I hope that you mean the living parts of the leaf and not areas that have died. You can get brown shades in cases where the plant has two copies of the red backed leaf trait. When the red pigment is viewed through the non-green parts of the leaf, you'll get some "brownish" shades, especially under certain types of light. I would imagine that the same plant viewed in natural sunlight will show distinct pink variegation as opposed to brown when viewed under fluorescent lights.

Q: *Is it possible to get a different color on the front and back of the flower petals?*

A: I have noticed that 'Picasso' appears to have different colors on the front and back of the flowers. The front of the flowers is a clear sky blue while the backs are silvery white. I'm not sure what causes the difference in coloration, but since there isn't a white flower pigment, the color must come from a failure to make or show the blue pigment. It may be that certain layers of cells can make the pigment while others do not, and the result is a contrast in color.

I would think that the effect would be limited to combinations such as blue/white, pink/white, or fuchsia/white, but a combination such as blue/pink might be possible and interesting. If any reader has observed a similar kind of contrast in the front and back of the petals, I'd like to hear from you. It might be possible to exploit this trait and come up with some interesting color combinations.

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Mites

From *Success with African Violets*,
Published by The African Violet Association of Australia Inc.

Signs of mite infestation

The mites are far too small to see with the naked eye; however, the damage they cause can be easily seen. Young center leaves become distorted and brittle and of a grayish appearance, appear exceptionally hairy, and they fail to grow or may even diminish in size so that the center of the plant just fades away, and you have lost the growing point. Flowers may become distorted or flecked or fail to open properly. Unfortunately, mites are easily spread from plant to plant, especially where plants are touching, or they may be spread by the hands or tools of the grower.

Treatment of infested plants

Many growers discard the plants showing signs of infestation, particularly if the damage is severe. Others spray the infested plant and keep it. Such infested plants, even after spraying, should be kept separate from all other plants. Where plants are discarded, leaves are commonly taken for propagation. These leaves are carefully washed in a bleach solution or soapy water before rinsing and planting.

Whether or not infested plants are discarded, growers report treating the remaining plants in order to contain the infestation. Some growers prefer to dip or drench their plants when treating them. It was mentioned that when spraying be sure to cover all parts of the plant, particularly the underneath of the inside leaves if using a contact spray such as Kelthane. Treatment is carried out three or more times at intervals of 5 to 7 days.

Prevention: (growers use one or more of the following)

• Spraying as a routine measure, say every three weeks, or once in autumn and once in spring, or only when an infestation is present • Spraying newly acquired plants or those returned from a show or display • Discarding any suspect plants • Isolation of newly acquired plants • Placing pest strips among plants as a deterrent.

Chemicals used

Kelthane (active ingredient Dicofol) is the most commonly used chemical. It is a specific miticide. Also used - Thiodan (active ingredient Endosulfan), Malathion, and Mavrick. Confidor is an environmentally friendly miticide to use.

Showcase

Northern Attitude

New Cultivar

Hybridized and Exhibited by:

Paul Sorano/L. Lyon Greenhouses

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Snuggles Snow Baby

Exhibited by: **Jim Toms**

Hybridized by:

S. Sorano/L. Lyon Greenhouses

Semiminiature

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Photo Credit. **Winston J. Goretsky**

Buckeye Remember Ohio

From Best AVSA Collection

2005 AVSA National Show

Exhibited by: **Anne Thomas**

Hybridized by: **P. Hancock**

Large

Cheryl Salatino
14 Maple Avenue
Sudbury, MA 01776
Email: salatino@collaborative.com

Demystifying Fertilizer
Some Food for Thought

Most African violet growers have recurring questions about fertilizer, no matter how long they have been caring for plants. Because the subject can be rather complex, it's best to start by understanding fertilizer fundamentals. In this column, I'd like to cover the basics by having a little fun with fertilizer facts.

Let's start with a quick assessment of your fertilizer use. Answer the following questions to get your Personal Plant Nutrient Score (PPNS)*.

1. Do you fertilize your plants?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. How often do you use fertilizer?
   a. Every watering; or, once per month as directed
   b. When I remember
   c. I don't

3. Do you rotate fertilizers during a typical month?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. Do you accurately follow instructions on the fertilizer package label?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Do your plants bloom consistently and display a healthy glow to the foliage?
   a. Yes
   b. No

Here's how to get your PPNS score. Every time you chose an "a" answer, award one (1) point. If you selected a "b" or "c" answer, do not add a point to your score.

PPNS Results	
5	Plant Pal
4	Budding Buddy
3	Up-and-Comer
2 or less	Newbie

If we each strive to be a Plant Pal, the rewards can be wonderful. African violets give back long-lasting color and beauty that will brighten anyone's spirits and surroundings.

* Please note: This unscientific Personal Plant Nutrient Score (PNS) is the sole creation of the author.

Fertilizer Basics

Now that you know the score, here are some fertilizer facts and application tips to put into practice.

1. Provide a Balanced Diet

We all need to eat. Water alone cannot sustain us for very long. This is the same situation for your African violets. Consider fertilizer as the essential food and vitamins necessary to grow strong and healthy plants. Select an inorganic, water soluble fertilizer – either granular or liquid forms are the easiest to use.

African violets are happiest when fed a regular, balanced diet. The many nutrients necessary for plant development are not available in the soil-less potting mixes we use for indoor plants. Experienced African violet growers and suppliers

recommend giving your plants a small amount of fertilizer every time you water. What does that entail, you ask? It's simple. First, read the fertilizer label to understand the dilution ratio, e.g. 1 tsp. per gallon applied once per month. Instead of following the once per month application, dilute ? tsp. of fertilizer in one gallon of water for use each time you water. You are now ready to start a continuous feed program.

2. *Understand the Funny Numbers*

When you look at any fertilizer label, you will see a series of three hyphenated numbers prominently displayed. Those numbers represent the proportions of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium that make up the fertilizer's formula (a.k.a., the NPK formula). These three nutrients are the major, and most important, elements. As we begin growing African violets, it is often difficult to remember which number goes with what element and how each one benefits the plant. Here's a simple short-cut to keep it straight:

N = nitrogen	Foliage
P= phosphorus	Bloom
K= potassium	Strength

As an example, when you see 20-20-20 in bold on the front of the fertilizer label, the formula is made up of 20% nitrogen, 20% phosphorous, and 20% potassium. The remaining 20% is made up of secondary and trace elements as well as inert material.

However, there's many more benefits provided by each of these major elements. Let's explore them a bit more so you can make an informed decision when selecting a balanced fertilizer.

Nitrogen

This essential element delivers what's needed for leaf and stem growth. It also gives the foliage its green color. Without the proper amount of nitrogen, plants display a yellowing or paleness in the foliage color. A plant with a nitrogen deficiency may also appear weak or stunted in overall growth. Older foliage will be the first to display deficiency symptoms since nitrogen travels to newer growth. A symptom of too much nitrogen often yields an abundance of leaf growth while slowing blossom production. Too much nitrogen in variegated varieties results in foliage that turns predominantly green.

Phosphorus

When we want to encourage a floral display, this middle element stimulates the formation of blossoms. Phosphorus also gets a plant started on a healthy track. It assists in the development of early roots and strong stems. Phosphorus continues to promote root growth through maturity. This element must be used in moderation. Phosphorus remains in the soil and available to the plant. Too much phosphorus can be detrimental to the continued development of a plant. As a general rule, avoid using only high middle number fertilizers.

Potassium

The third member of the major elements is the stress reducer. Potassium enables a plant to manage environmental changes and difficult conditions including drought, cold, heat, and disease. It also plays an important part in enabling a strong root system to absorb other essential nutrients.

Secondary and Trace elements

There are several more nutritional elements needed to produce a healthy plant. Only small amounts of each are required. You can find the list in the fine print on the back of the fertilizer label. These elements include sulfur, calcium, magnesium, zinc, copper, manganese, iron, and others. It is rare that a plant will become deficient in one of these elements if a consistent fertilizer program is practiced.

3. *Beware of Overfeeding*

Too much of anything is never good for you. When a plant receives more than it needs, it reacts by displaying symptoms over a period of time. If you are following a continuous feed program, be certain to dilute fertilizers to 1/4 tsp. (or less) per gallon. If you are wick watering, 1/8 tsp. per gallon is recommended.

Another good practice is to regularly leach excess fertilizers from the soil. Leaching can be described as flushing the accumulated fertilizer salts out by pouring a cup or more of plain water through the plant until it comes out clear (not discolored) through the bottom of the pot. If you are able to leach every 6 to 8 weeks, you will avoid white fertilizer salts developing on the soil and crusted on pots.

Be careful not to fertilize a dry plant. If plants are wilted or stressed, use a small amount of plain water to revive them. After a day or two, you may water completely with a diluted fertilizer solution.

Frequently Asked Questions

Still want more information about fertilizer? There's plenty to dig into – rest assured that you'll pick it up as you grow more plants and exchange ideas with fellow African violet friends.

a. What is the best fertilizer to use for African violets?

There is no one answer to this question. You must know your growing conditions and determine what is needed for the particular growing phases of your plants. Try a few different brands and formulations until you find the right ones for you. I like to use 20-20-20 as an all around feed and 12-36-14 for variegated plants or as an extra kick for blossom production.

My suggestion is to change it up during the month. Most people don't like to eat the same food every day. Your plants

may enjoy some variety as well. Why not rotate fertilizers on a weekly basis? Mark a calendar for at least 3 months in advance with the fertilizer program you plan to use each week. List each fertilizer on the day of the week you regularly water – it's a simple way to keep track and avoid confusion on watering day. I rotate three fertilizers throughout the month that work well in my growing environment. The fourth week is fertilizer free – only plain water is used.

One last note, in order to ensure there are enough major nutrients provided by fertilizers used in a continuous feed program, Pauline Bartholomew recommends in her book *"Growing to Show"* that the NPK formula adds up to approximately 60%. In the book, Pauline provides additional guidance regarding fertilizers needed to grow fabulous show plants.

b. Please explain the difference between a balanced fertilizer and a bloom booster?

We've already described balanced fertilizers as a formula that includes nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and some trace elements. An example of an evenly balanced fertilizer for year round use is 20-20-20.

A fertilizer high in phosphorus and low in nitrogen is considered a bloom booster. A formula of 5-50-17 will certainly push a plant to develop blossoms. This product must be used cautiously because continued use can hinder the development of foliage and the root system. Consider it as a jolt to the plant. Growers typically use bloom boosters to prepare African violets for show.

Many people rotate a 12-36-14 fertilizer with 20-20-20. A regular routine of this combination ensures the African violet will receive enough of the essential nutrients it needs to develop all aspects of growth.

Grow smart. Grow well.

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Sinningia 'White Sprite'

Exhibited by: **Carolyn Conlin-Lane**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Optimara Rose Quartz
Optimara Little Pearl
Optimara Little Rhodonite

Best Holtkamp Collection

2005 AVSA National Show

Exhibited by: **Kathi Lahti**

What is a Gesneriad?

by John Beaulieu

From his book, *An Introduction to Gesneriads, African Violets, and Their Relatives*

This is a family of plants that is continually growing in popularity. Almost everyone has grown a gesneriad at one time or another; it is just that they aren't familiar with the name 'gesneriads'! The best known member of this family is the African violet (*Saintpaulia*).

When I travel and give lectures and slide presentations at local Horticultural Societies here in Ontario, the most requested topic is one with the same title as this book, 'An Introduction to Gesneriads'. Usually I will start my talk with a question to the audience, "How many here grow or have grown African violets?" Of course, most of them raise their hand, as the African violet is the undisputed queen of houseplants. I then follow with a second question, asking how many of them have "grown some of the other gesneriads"? Very few, if any, hands ever go up. However, upon naming *Gloxinias*, Goldfish Plants, Lipstick Plants, and the Chocolate Soldier, there is usually a flurry of hands waving. It is just that it wasn't realized that all these popular plants are related to the African violet and are 'gesneriads'.

The gesneriad family is named after a Swiss naturalist, Konrad Gesner, who lived in the 1500's, long before the first plants of this family were described. He was involved in natural studies ranging from medicinal efficacy of European spas to writing about the history of plants (not gesneriads). It was a French botanist, Charles Plumier, in 1693 that suggested the use of Gesner's name for this family of plants.

A hard "g" sound as in 'girl' should be used when pronouncing 'gesneriad'. In some cases, those not familiar with the German/Swiss pronunciation of a guttural 'g' have softened the sound to a 'j'. Most authorities agree that the hard "g" should be used to respect the Gesner family and the language from which the name is taken.

To be technical, gesneriads belong to the family, Gesneriaceae, in Division 7 of the Plant Kingdom. They are a very diverse group that has an extremely wide range of foliage, flower shapes, and size.

The Gesneriaceae is a family that is found growing around the world, in north and south temperate zones, as well as in the tropics. Most of the common varieties that we come across are tropical, but there are a few that grow at high altitudes and are semi-hardy; some are even hardy, similar to our own outdoor perennial plants.

Like all plants found in the tropical rainforests and cloud forests, habitat destruction is a big problem. Organizations such as The Gesneriad Research Foundation arrange expeditions to these regions to study and collect plant material from the wild. They are continually discovering new species. There are 125 genera, with over 2,000 species of gesneriads with new discoveries being added all the time.

Many of the popular gesneriads that we grow are species plants and are just as colorful and interesting as the newer hybrids. A species is an original 'wild' plant that you would find growing in nature. Unlike modern hybrids, species plants will come true from seed. Fortunately, many hobbyists enjoy growing the wild species and thus enabling them to be preserved even when their habitat is being destroyed.

Gesneriads are found growing in a variety of habitats. Although most are terrestrial, that is to say that they grow on the ground, there are many that are epiphytic. These gesneriads are found growing in the canopy of the cloud forests, anchoring themselves in notches and living on debris that collects there. They are not parasitic and do no harm to the host tree. The popular Goldfish Plant (*Columnea*) and the well known Lipstick Vine (*Aeschynanthus*) are typical of these epiphytic gesneriads.

Some of the gesneriads such as the wild species African violets (*Saintpaulia*) and many of the *Streptocarpus* species are found growing among rocks and on cliff faces (very much like finding ferns growing on the Niagara Escarpment here in Ontario, Canada).

Gesneriad flowers come in many forms ...

Saintpaulia
(African-violet)

Nematanthus
(Guppy plant)

Sinningia speciosa
(Florist Gloxinia)

Columnea
(Goldfish Plant)

Aeschynanthus
(Lipstick Vine)

Streptocarpus
(Cape Primrose)

FRANCINE PILON, CANADIAN HYBRIDIZER

Based on a Interview by Nancy Robitaille

The conservation of the original species of the genre *Saintpaulia* is always a preoccupation and a priority for me. During the last few years, I was able to gather twenty-six different species, but not without difficulty. It is, unfortunately, difficult to find them and to procure them.

I would like to continue my work and my research on these in order to be able to acquire those which are missing. One of my dearest wishes would be to bring to prominence the species, to give them one more chance to survive the destruction of their natural environment, and to offer them a place where one would be always able to get them in several years. This is why much of my research is to find *S. goetzeanna, S. teitensis, S. diplotricha #6,* and *S. Robertson*. Unfortunately, the first three are among the most rare and most difficult to find.

I also hope to finish a book on the history of the magnificent original species. I began this book more than ten years ago. The first four years of research were laborious and gave no satisfying results. I have to say that at the beginning, I didn't own a computer or have access to the internet. All correspondence was made through regular mail. I received very little to no answers to my letters that were sent to the four corners of the world. Finally, after all these difficulties of the first years, and following the acquisition of a computer, one day while playing with the Internet, I made contact with Professor Bellstedt, who works especially with the genre *Streptocarpus*. I spoke with him about my project of the book and he, in turn, put me in contact with Mr. Bytebier who, spent time in Kenya. Among other projects, he concentrated on putting the *Saintpaulia* species in order.

This became for me an extremely precious contact. Thanks to his generosity and interest in my project, I am going to be able to share with the public an element that I found essential and indispensable for such a book - photos of original plants in their natural habitat. I was never able to imagine offering a book on the wild species from their country of origin, without actually going there.

He permitted me equally to establish new contacts as interesting as they are captivating. My research for writing the book was a most fascinating adventure. But I'll save the rest for the launch of the book!

I also hope that in the near future to have a chance to find leaves or plants of the first trailer hybrids before they disappear. These plants were presented by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Tinari in the beginning of the 1950s.

These were 'Tinari Sky Trailer', 'Tinari Snow Trailer', 'Tinari Star Trailer' and 'Tinari Royal Blue Trailer', which I had the chance to possess, but unfortunately, I lost them when moving.

This would complete, to me, an empty place in my collection between the wild plants and their closest cousins, the trailers. Also, if any of you know some charitable soul who has these species and their trailers, I would be most happy to make their acquaintance!

Being very curious by nature, when I became interested in hybridization in the middle of 1992, I wanted to learn everything. Hybridizing offered an interesting opening on a fascinating world.

After having read an article written by Denis Croteau on hybridization, I sent him a list of questions by mail.His answers furnished a lot of supplementary information, but only augmented my curiosity on the subject. I signed up for a course on hybridization given by none other than this same man!

Since I developed a particular passion for species and for trailers, my questions concerning hybridization were especially orientated toward these two types of plants. I made my first cross in 1996 and presented three new trailing specimens in 1998.

I am only beginning to hybridize. I have presently only nine hybrids, which are six standard trailers - 'Azali', 'Gazou', 'Laini', 'Sema', 'Shina' and 'Ti-Mine'. I also have two standards with single crowns,'Louiman Sequo' and 'Haki', and a semi-miniature, 'Wiko', which is also single crowned. 'Louiman Sequo' was my first hybrid, and its name is the result of a mix between souvenirs of a voyage and the names of the parents used for the cross.

To choose names for the new hybrids was not important for me the first few years. Back then, as with African violets, cats were and still are a passion with me and a large part of my life. Eventually, I named two of my trailing hybrids after two of my cats, 'Gazou' and 'Ti-Mine'.

Having developed an undeniable passion for African violets following my research for the book and for my first conference which was in 1995 on the origins of the African violet, I discovered that I also had a huge interest in Africa. It is a country evolving and mysterious, which unfortunately today, is dying at the hand of man. With a lesson from African friends, I learned a few words in Swahili. This gave me the idea to utilize this language for the naming of my new hybrids: 'Azali' (Eternal), 'Laini' (Soft), 'Sema' (to say), 'Shina' (root, source) 'Haki' (Justice), and 'Wiko' (inspired from the word Mwiko which means 'Taboo'.)

I am presently working with seven other new hybrids

which are crosses made with a wild species. These are four standards, two miniatures, all trailers, as well as a single crowned miniature.

I prefer to work with variegated foliage and standard trailer varieties. Trailers of standard varieties are plants that are rather unappreciated, unfortunately. I find that if we give them a chance, they are very generous, and so very spectacular! It is a pity that many growers exclude these from their collections due to lack of space.

By the way, with trailers, we are able to control at all times the space they occupy on our shelves. More than that, these plants offer more opportunities that many others don't have. They are able to be cultivated in hanging pots, and many varieties adapt very well to natural light on the window sills.

They are also ideal for beginners who haven't yet been bitten by the bug which transforms their home into a green house devoted to African violets!

I was asked which of my plants I think is the best. It is very difficult to answer such a question. It's a little like asking us which of our children we prefer! Contrarily, if I consider particular points such as flowers, for example, 'Gazou' and 'Sema' are different to my eyes. They offer, I believe, a touch of 'newness' among trailers. 'Azali' is equally different from others. It's a white flower subtly tinted with pink, on variegated, dark green foliage.

As far as foliage goes, 'Ti-Mine' is markedly different. The color is very dark, almost black, and its tint of white and pink on a pink flower is in the form of a starfish.

'Shina' presents small button flowers of pink with a fine white border.

When I first became involved with African violets, few people from my club cultivated trailers. In fact, only one other person had a few. My first trailer was 'Cherokee Trail' by Linda Ray. It was with this variety that I had my first experiences discovering how they were conceived. In Quebec it seemed that for a time we had very little to do with trailers. It was very difficult for me to find different varieties.

Little by little, by visiting different exhibits in Ontario, for example, I was able to enlarge my collection. My interests then were more pointed to the evolution of plants and to try to understand the best culture methods to bring them to their full potential.

It was only later that I began to learn the names of hybridizers who worked with trailers. It was no surprise to discover that these names were mainly from the United States.

I became aware that not finding many trailers here in Quebec was due to the fact that there were no Quebec hybridizers, and in fact, few Canadians who worked with trailers - fewer yet who worked with standard trailers.

This motivated me to embark with this adventure. Among standards, the series 'Ramblin" are plants I appreciate so much for their foliage and their floriferousness, as well as their form.

Rather than favor a particular hybridizer, I choose plants with which I work on an established criteria, as most other hybridizers do, I imagine. The type of foliage, the variety, the flower color, depending on the results researched.

Blue is, without any doubt, my preferred color to work with. That's one of my first choices. I try, nevertheless, to research particular blues. Blues of intense color attract me the most. Blue is a definitely a part of the base elements among the seven new hybrids I am presently working with.

I am interested in trying for other colors as well. While blue is very attractive to me, why not a flower with orange tints, colors of a setting sun? Red flowers are also not common with trailers and are another goal of mine.

Finally, I tried to find new combinations, either fantasies or borders. It is not always easy to combine all this information and arrive at a result that is interesting from the first try.

Until now, I have only exhibited my hybrids once, in a local exposition in 1998, at the African Violet Society of Greater Montreal. These were 'Gazou', 'Laini' and 'Ti-Mine'.

I won the award of Best Hybrid with 'Gazou', which was

such a surprise! This was in my very early years and encouraged me to continue my work in hybridization.

I am just as enthusiastic now about hybridizing trailers as I was so many years ago.

This is a passion which I believe will be around for a long time. I do spend time on other types of culture, with plants such as orchids and bonsai, but I always return to my first loves, the wild species and trailers of the genre *Saintpaulia.*

Registration Report

Joe Bruns
1220 Stratford Lane
Hanover Park, IL 60133
Email: jbruns@qwip.net

A name reservation costs $1.00 and is valid for two years, after which time it may be extended two years for an additional $1.00. Registration of the plant is $5.00 unless completed within the reservation period, in which case the balance is then $4.00. Please make check payable to AVSA.

Dolores Harrington – Fridley, MN

*__Chiffon Clouds__ (9441) 6/13/05 (D. Harrington) Single-semidouble orchid two-tone pansy. Medium green, heart-shaped, quilted, scalloped. **Miniature**

*__Orchid Lullaby__ (9442) 6/13/05 (D. Harrington) Semidouble-double orchid-pink pansy/variable purple fantasy. Medium green, heart-shaped, quilted. **Miniature**

*****

Robert Kurzynski – Clifton, NJ

*__Jazz Bouquet__ (9443) 6/14/05 (R. Kurzynski) Semidouble-double pink two-tone pansy. **Variegated** dark green, pink and white, plain, quilted/red back. **Semiminiature**

*__Jazz Singer__ (9444) 6/14/05 (R. Kurzynski) Single-semidouble mauve two-tone pansy. **Variegated** dark green, pink and white, plain, quilted/red back. **Semiminiature**

*__Jersey Jazz__ (9445) 6/14/05 (R. Kurzynski Single-semidouble dark red two-tone pansy. **Variegated** dark green and white, plain, quilted. **Semiminiature**

*****

Ruth Bann – Fridley, MN

*__Rebel's October Breeze__ (9446) 6/27/05 (R. Bann) Semidouble-double medium blue ruffled pansy/variable white edge. **Variegated** dark green, cream and pink, ovate, quilted. **Standard**

*__Rebel's Rhubarb Frost__ (9447) 6/27/05 (R. Bann) Semidouble bright pink ruffled pansy/white-green edge. **Variegated** medium green and cream, spooned, glossy. **Standard**

*__Rebel's Two Cents__ (9448) 6/27/05 (R. Bann) Semidouble pink two-tone large ruffled star. **Variegated** medium green and white, plain, quilted, glossy. **Standard**

*__Rebel's Zippy Zena__ (9449) 6/27/05 (R. Bann) Single-semidouble dark blue star/wide white edge. Medium green, heart-shaped, glossy/red back. **Standard**

*****

Nancy Braun – Fitchburg, WI

*__Debon's Sarah Clarinda__ (9450) 7/23/05 (N. Braun) Single medium pink frilled pansy/darker eye, white edge. **Variegated** medium green and white, pointed, scalloped. **Standard**

*****

*__Ma's Blue Spinner__ (9451) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Semidouble chimera white pansy/blue-purple stripe, variable thin green edge. **Variegated** medium green and white, pointed, quilted. **Standard**

*__Ma's Blueberry Taffy__ (9452) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Double dark blue star/white-green edge. **Variegated** medium green and white, plain, pointed. **Standard**

*__Ma's Crime Scene__ (9453) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Semidouble red star. **Variegated** dark green, white and pink, plain. **Standard**

*__Ma's Elroy__ (9454) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Single-semidouble chimera light purple large star/darker stripe, blue and pink fantasy. **Variegated** dark green and white, serrated/red back. **Standard**

*__Ma's Evening Sky__ (9455) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Single-semidouble coral large star. **Variegated** dark green and white, serrated. **Standard**

*__Ma's Fruit Smoothie__ (9456) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Double lavender-pink star/purple fantasy. **Variegated** medium green and white, quilted, wavy, serrated. **Standard**

*__Ma's Neon Lights__ (9457) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Semidouble hot pink large frilled star. **Variegated** medium green and white, quilted. **Standard**

*__Ma's Prince Froggie__ (9458) 7/30/05 (O. Robinson) Double lavender ruffled star/purple fantasy, thin green edge. **Variegated** medium green and white, plain, pointed. **Standard**

*****

Ralph Robinson – Naples, NY

***Rob's Bad Bunny** (9459) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble bright pink pansy. **Crown variegated** dark green, cream and pink, pointed/red back. **Miniature**

***Rob's Blizzard Bunny** (9460) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Double white star. **Crown variegated** medium green and white, pointed. **Semiminiature**

***Rob's Chilly Willy** (9461) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Double silver-white star/medium blue overlay, edge. **Crown variegated** medium green and white, pointed. **Miniature**

***Rob's Combustible Pigeon** (9462) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble pink pansy/blue fantasy, white edge. **Crown variegated** medium green, yellow and white, plain, serrated. **Semiminiature**

***Rob's Flirtatious Floozie** (9463) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble white pansy/rose-pink eye, edge. **Crown variegated** medium green and white. **Miniature**

***Rob's Peedletuck** (9464) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble medium blue pansy. **Crown variegated** dark green, beige and cream/red back. **Semiminiature**

***Rob's Pilot Light** (9465) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble white bell/blue eye, overlay, edge. **Crown variegated** medium green and white, pointed. **Miniature**

***Rob's Scrumptious** (9466) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble white star/dark pink patches. **Crown variegated** medium green, cream and white, quilted. **Semiminiature**

***Rob's Suicidal Squirrel** (9467) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble ruby red pansy. **Crown variegated** dark green, beige and cream, pointed/red back. **Semiminiature**

***Rob's Zoot Suit** (9468) 7/30/05 (R. Robinson) Semidouble blue star/thin white edge. **Crown variegated** dark green, beige and cream, glossy, serrated/red back. **Semiminiature**

NAME RESERVATIONS

Shirlene Jones – Wolf Lake, IL

* Wizard's Blue Stones * Wizard's Snowdonia * Wizard's Vita Merlini * Wizard's Wintry Sun *

REGISTRATION CHANGE

The following names and/or descriptions have been changed at the request of the hybridizers:

Lavender Lace (9049) – Change name to **Lavender Lace Romance**

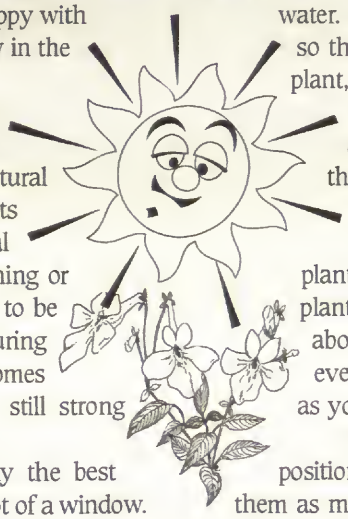
Rebel's Crested Robin (8692) – Change blossom description to "Single-semidouble bright red ruffled pansy/variable white edge." (Change edge to variable.)

Growing in Natural Light

by Sue Hodges

While many growers have artificial lighting for their plants, violets and other gesneriads are quite happy with natural light. After all, this is the way they grow in the wild!

Probably the largest benefit of artificial light is that there are no cloudy days; the light is consistent and able to be controlled. With natural light, growth will probably be slower, and plants will take longer to bloom than under artificial light. African violets can take some early morning or late afternoon sun, but midday sunlight needs to be filtered with a curtain or something similar. During winter the sun is lower in the sky and often comes into rooms more than in summer, and it is still strong enough to burn unprotected plants.



A south or southeast window is probably the best aspect with the plant being within about one foot of a window. Trees, eaves, and awnings will all have a bearing on how much light enters your room. Of course, skylights allow lots of light into rooms so conditions will vary from room to room.

Pots with water wells are attractive for growing on windowsills, and they allow you to fertilize your plants as you water. Turn your plants a quarter turn every few days so that they develop evenly. If you do not turn your plant, it will grow towards the light source and will develop a lean to one side. Turning the plants also encourages buds to develop evenly around the plant.

If you grow a number of plants at a window, you may like to rotate the positions so that the plants all get an even share of the light. Sometimes plants can be placed on containers to raise them above those that are closer to the light. Some people even suspend plants from a rail above the window as you would hanging baskets.

Try moving your plants around until you find a position where they are happy and bloom well. Give them as much light as you can, short of hot, midday sun, and they will reward you with lots of bloom.

From the African Violet News, the official journal of the African Violet Society of New South Wales, Australia

Design

Photo Credit: **Anne M. Nicholas**

Shakespeare's As You Like It

Best Small Interpretive Flower Arrangement

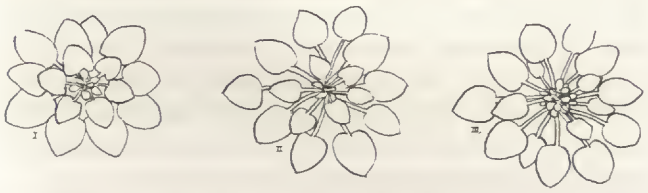
2005 AVSA National Show

Exhibited by: **Anne M. Nicholas**

PYTHIUM

by Georgene Albrecht

In the fall of 2004, my plants that were intended for show at the Cincinnati convention, started to take on a stunted center. As winter passed, they became worse and looked as if they might have Impatient Necrotic Spot Virus. Dr. Gary Moorman, Professor of Plant Pathology at Pennsylvania State University, was asked to diagnose the problem. His diagnosis was Pythium, a fungus-like disease of the root system. He sent me wonderful fact sheets about this disease. The statements here are based on them, but this is not to be construed as technical advice. We just want to pass along information to help grow better plants.



SYMPTOMS

Here are sketches of the three stages that my plants developed. Stage one: The centers became "miniaturized" and growth stopped because the roots were damaged. The growth was not distorted in any way, just small. (At this stage I should have taken healthy leaves and rooted them.) Stage two: The centers almost disappeared entirely, exposing the leaf petioles of older leaves. The oldest leaves turned yellow and drooped at times. This was the loss of nutrition and water because the roots were unable to function. Older leaves were sacrificed first. Stage three: The plant either died or sent up several new, vigorous growths from the center after it was re-potted. I removed these growths when leaves were the size of a dime and rooted them in nothing but perlite.

If any plant changes growth habit, take it out of the pot and look at the root system. If it is brown, odorous, soft, or water-logged, try to remove damaged roots or the entire root system. Place the crown stem in perlite and enclose in a plastic bag. Remove many leaves because the plant just can't support them. Make sure that the leaves are dry too.

Dr. Moorman says that the pythium attacks the fine, new growth on the roots first. This disease is present in contaminated soilless mixes that contain moss and in contaminated water. Fungus gnats may also play a part in spreading this from plant to plant. Dirty tools, benches, and equipment can also play a part. Prevention is the best policy. Be spotless about your growing area and tools.

CAUSES

Sterilize soil mixes to 180 degrees and hold that temperature for thirty minutes. Heating any longer or higher will harm the beneficial organisms and actually allow disease to increase. Once the soil is sterilized, cover and store in a clean, container. Water can also be contaminated by coming into contact with diseased soil or plant material. I remembered the flood in the fall of 2004 and the fact that we were told to drink and cook with bottled water. One of my friends has purchased a soil sterilizer, and I am going to pay more attention to my potting mix. I do know that when I want to have the best plants, I grow them in a mixture of vermiculite and perlite and omit the moss. Rooting leaves in this is also sure to be fast and disease-free.

CONTROL

Dr. Moonnan says that once this disease has invaded the roots, it is very difficult to control. Pythium can also invade and rot the base of cuttings. Dr. Moorman's fact sheets are geared toward the greenhouse grower, so be aware that I have adapted to hobby use.

There are chemical and biological controls for fungus available, but I am not qualified to list them. Pythium has become resistant to some. Biological control is usually added to the potting mix at transplant time. My personal advice is to discard the soil ball and root in sterile medium. If the crown looks brown, mushy, or soft, discard all of that tissue, then sterilize your equipment and wash your hands or gloves. Take cuttings if available.

Go to your local agricultural agent or university lab to seek chemical advice. Your local nurseries may carry popular fungicides, but read the label and make sure you can use this on houseplants. Follow every direction exactly. Be safe, grow smart.

REFERENCE

Moorman, Gary, Professor, Department of Plant Pathology University of Pennsylvania, University Park, PA 16802

http://www.ppath.cas.psu.edu/EXTENSION/PLANT_DISEASE/idex.htl

TRAILERS

by Nancy Robitaille

Trailers have been evolving gradually since 1957 when they were first hybridized. *Saintpaulia grotei,* a species unique in its climbing habit in the wild, needed support. Grown in the average home conditions, it trailed instead of climbing without this support and became somewhat popular.

S. grotei has round leaves that are slightly spooned with medium green, deeply serrated edges, and the leaf stems, (petioles) are thin, dark brown and flexible. It produces a small, medium blue flower with a slightly darker center and is not particularly an attractive plant in itself. But the species possessed enough fascinating qualities to keep it of interest to hybridizers of the day.

The first hybrid trailer was made with *S. grotei* which produced 'Sailor Girl,' which was not an outstanding plant. Frank and Anne Tinari produced hundreds of seedlings that were analyzed, but none were proven of exceptional beauty. Most exhibited small flowers about the size of a dime. Colors were all shades of blue.

Just one seedling, 'Wild Girl', was selected from that generation to be used in further hybridizing pursuits. The foliage of 'Sailor Girl' had an interesting toothed edge and white spot at the base known as "girl type" foliage. (The first girl foliage plant was 'Blue Girl', discovered by C. Ulery in 1941.)

'Wild Girl' was not a trailer, but it was floriferous and had the unusual girl foliage. It offered to the hybridizers, Anne and Frank Tinari, a promise of possibilities through further efforts.

When 'Wild Girl' and *S. grotei* were crossed, actually a back cross, seedlings showed the climbing, or indeed, the trailing habit, with larger flowers and a more exciting color range. The seedlings were evaluated on the basis of floriferousness, color, and trailing characteristics.

In 1954, Frank and Anne Tinari registered the first trailers with the AVSA and offered them in catalogs. There were six varieties exhibited for the first time at the National AVSA Convention Show in St. Louis.

At that first introduction of the new type of plant, the trailers were almost ignored by the public. That was the year Lyndon Lyon introduced the first double pink flowers on African violets. Everyone at the convention went crazy for the double pink, and the new trailing form of African violets went by the wayside. "Everyone was obsessed with pink and perfection," recalled Anne Tinari. Perhaps had trailers been introduced either before or after the excitement about the double pink, trailers would have been received with more interest and with the gratitude they deserved.

At this show in 1954, the following trailers were exhibited: 'Sky Trailer', was a soft pale sky gray-blue plant with double flowers. 'Royal Blue Trailer' had deep purple flowers and attractive green foliage with red reverse. It had single to semi-double blossoms with a bright yellow eye. 'Snow Trailer' had glistening white blossoms of good form and size, sometimes lightly tinged in blue. 'Star Trailer,' one of Anne Tinari's favorites, had blue two-tone blossoms. Some of these varieties are still available today.

The trailers had been overlooked at the convention, and the Tinaris were discouraged with the lack of public response so they decided to "scrap" the idea of a trailer and to move on to other hybridizing pursuits.

Ten years passed, and still no one showed interest in trailers. Then Lyndon Lyon began a project to capture the trailing quality of the species trailer.

In 1966, Lyon crossed *S. grotei* with 'Tiny Rose,' a pink miniature violet. The best seedling of this cross was crossed again with standard 'Hello Dolly,' but the second generation, named 'Pink Angel' trailed very little.

Time inched by. Lyon finally attained his goal with 'Violet Trail,' which was a blue single star with circular foliage, twelve inches across, which trailed with success over the sides of a pot, thus producing a sturdy trailer conveniently cascading so that it could be used in a hanging basket.

Having developed the trailing "mold", he could then create other hybrids with the cascading habit and with larger and more varied colors of bloom. It was still necessary to back cross to 'Violet Trail' frequently to retain the trailing foliage, but normal experimentation could bring about the lovely colors and the different type blooms. Demand and support arose from the public, and the market was flooded with new standard trailers.

Henry C. Peterson, a commercial grower, had a very small species called *S. magungensis minima* that seemed to possess some characteristics of the trailer. This plant was sent to Lyon for research, and with the tiny plant, semi-miniature and miniature trailers could be produced.

The *S. magungensis minima* possesses a growth habit similar to *S. grotei*, but this smaller plant had very small leaves on shorter petioles and petite flowers of a deeper violet blue.

Lyon crossed *S. magungensis minima* with a standard pink trailer, then recrossed the hybrid onto other pink trailers. The result was seedling trailers with one-inch leaves which extended eight inches across the pot. Included in these semi-miniature hybrids was a pale violet, 'Happy Trails', and a single blue called 'Pixie Blue,' the latter of which I personally have had excellent results with the leaves producing babies and the plantlets producing flowers in record time.

Lyon crossed *S. magungensis minima* with a very tiny leaved violet producing trailers of a miniature size.

In 1974 miniature trailers were first produced. Miniature

trailers are intriguing because so much happens in such a small space. Growers must endeavor to keep the spread of the foliage in balance with the size of the flower.

'Mohawk Trail' spreads in a six-inch circle possessing one-inch flowers, keeping the size of flowers in balance with the spread of foliage.

Micro-miniature trailers were soon hybridized with leaves as tiny as the fingernail of a baby. The root system of micro-miniature trailer, 'Pip Squeek' could easily fit into a demi-tasse cup.

Harold Rienhardt, hybridizing friend of Lyndon Lyon, worked with the trailer to produce a hybrid that carried the white variegated foliage of standard plant, 'Tommie Lou'. The first variegated trailers were standard trailers, 'Blue Star Lou' and 'Pink Star Lou.' Succeeding crosses produced 'Lora Lou' and 'Lucky Lou' which were semi-miniatures.

A natural procession led to hybridizing a fantasy trailer displaying various colors speckling a solid base color. Results were 'Pioneer Trail,' lilac with purple marking, and 'Goin' Coconuts,' a semi-double star with dark blue flecks on rose background. 'Fantasty Island' came in a semi-double lavender star with purple flecks.

New hybrids continue to be presented to the public. One small trailer with pale yellow flowers is now in much demand. 'Chantaspring' was introduced to the buying public and has made a lot of money for the Internet sellers on eBay. The hybridizer of 'Chantaspring' is unknown.

Culture of all Trailers in general

Trailers may be grown near a window, on a shady porch, or under lights.

1. Never allow them to dry out.
2. Do not over water.
3. Hang in natural light or at the end of light fixtures.
4. Regular fertilizer is important. Foliar feeding is welcomed.

Standard trailers sometimes need to be pinched out. Leaves that are either larger or smaller than most of the plant should be pinched out. It is often necessary on standard trailers to pinch out the centers of each of the heads in order to encourage business or more crowns. If one crown develops larger or smaller than others, it should be pinched out.

Basically, trailers need the same or almost the same culture as all African violets, with a few exceptions. Both need the following:

1. Same type of repotting techniques
2. Watering
3. Lighting
4. Fertilizing
5. Pest control.

Soil mix is the same as for standard African violets.

For lighting, trailers do equally well on east or west facing windowsills (note that these should be turned frequently to encourage bloom on all crowns) or under florescent bulbs. They should be protected with sheer curtains from midday sun.

Under lights, trailers need the same hours as standards, 10-12 hours per day. They should be approximately 8-12 inches from the lights.

As with standard violets, temperatures range from 65-80 degrees F. (18-27 degrees C.) with a five degree F (3 degree C.) drop during the night. Variegated trailers should be kept cooler – not higher than 75 degrees F (24 degrees C.). To keep good variegation, place variegated violets on lower shelves as with standards.

Temperatures below 60 degrees F. (16 degrees C) will slow up growth for all size trailers. Heat exceeding eighty degrees F. makes foliage droop, and buds will blast before blooming.

Water as with any African violet, using warm water. Avoid splashing leaves (however, occasional washing of leaves will remove dust particles.) Watering may be directly onto soil, top watering, capillary matting, or by wick method. They should be watered once each month directly onto soil (leaching) to clear up salts accumulation. Remember, a small pot will need more frequently watering than a larger one. When over watered, petioles will become brown and mushy. Under-watering and dryness for any length of time may stunt the plant or even destroy it.

Trailers can absorb humidity sitting on pebble trays or by misting. Air should circulate freely among all violets.

Fertilizing is similar to standard violets. A good balanced fertilizer is recommended. Keep in mind that trailers need slightly heavier feeding to avoid yellowing of leaves. Another point to remember is that when misting trailers with diluted fertilizer, the plant absorbs much more of the fertilizer than when watered either by soil or by wick.

All trailers should have at least three main crowns from one central stalk, with only one plant in the pot. When judged, points should be deducted if plant has less than three crowns. Flowers should be located on each of the three or more crowns for full points. Trailers are judged on form rather than symmetry.

Semi-miniature and miniature trailers are not restricted to size. That is, a mini trailer does not have to be less than six inches across.

Most trailers are very floriferous. Whatever the trailer's size, it should have a pot in proportion to the plant.

Miniature or semi-miniature trailers will develop larger leaves if put into large pot or hanging basket, but this does not change the classification.

Trailers can put out a few larger crowns. If most of the plant is small crowned, the larger crowns should be pinched off. If a large leaved trailer throws out some small leaved crowns, these should be removed. The size of the leaves should be consistent all over the plant.

A trailer's first pot usually is the 2 1/4" pot. A miniature trailer may spend its entire life in this size pot or in one near

this size. Semi-miniature or standard trailers would of course be placed immediately in a three-or-four-inch pot. As the trailer grows, the pot should be kept about one-third the diameter of its leaf spread, as are standard African violets.

Because of its low spreading root stem, the trailer should never need more than a squatty pot, four inches deep. Standard trailers should do well in large squatty pots or hanging baskets.

Basket grown standard trailers are very attractive. Mini or semi-mini trailers will of course be too large for show if not confined. According to Judges Handbook, 1998, "page 55...."trailers are not restricted to size." So a small standard trailer could be entered in a show in a small pot and a large semi-miniature trailer could be entered in a very large pot. Proportion is the key.

Foliage Training

Work at increasing suckers rather than removing them as with standard violets.

A trailer baby will look like a standard violet baby, but as it grows, sucker type growths will appear. These are called "rabbit's ears," a potential new crown.

The baby trailer is too weak to support this additional growth until the plant itself establishes a firm base. Rub off these small suckers that appear on the baby trailer until the baby develops eight full grown leaves.

When the baby develops this size, we might call it a "starter plant", and the rules change. At this point, the grower can pinch off tiny leaves sprouting from the center point of the crown. When pinching, be careful not to damage the bases of the remaining foliage. You must leave on at least four leaves to provide nourishment for the root system. Note that the semi-trailers, if still grown, SHOULD NOT be pinched.

On standard trailers pinching should be continued throughout the lifetime of the plant to encourage branching and lush growth. The newer mini and semi-mini trailers, for the most part, trail very well on their own. Cascading branches may be pinned down until the pot is filled. There should be no bare stems showing.

Any mature leaf can produce a new sucker at its base. Usually two to thee suckers will actually grow from a single pinch. Some leaves will never produce suckers, and a few may turn yellow and drop off. When the crowns thicken and form leaves, pinch them regularly, thus attaining many crowns to form the single trailing plant.

Keep the center of the trailer open to the light to give leaf and flower growth. This would involve the removal of all suckers and some leaves that grow at the center of the pot. You might insert toothpicks in the soil on each side of the crowns to keep them from running together.

Trailer Propagation

The trailer may be divided at its roots, creating two separate plants from one. However, another method is even more simple. A mature sucker my be cut off, then rooted in vermiculite.

When taking a mature crown for propagation, detach a six-leaf crown and remove leaves from crown's lowest inch. Scrape surface to stimulate root production, dust cut in with fermate if desired (against disease) or with rooting hormone. Then plant in your regular soil mix or in vermiculite.

The crown may be placed in a plastic sack for humidity. Provide air holes. After four weeks, the plastic should be removed.

As with the standard violets, leaves from the trailer will root very quickly. Keep rooting leaves out of direct sunlight and water from the bottom to prevent rot before roots may be formed. Babies may be seen within six to eight weeks, sometimes earlier.

Start a New Plant

by Ina Beaver • Porters Lake, NS, Canada

The quickest way to start a new plant is by removing a sucker. A baby plantlet either grows under bottom leaves or directly over leaves instead of producing a bloom stalk. This will quickly distort the shape of the whole plant if the sucker is allowed to develop. When I see four leaves in a circle, I know this to be a sucker, not two leaves, which can be the beginning of a blossom stalk if on a leaf which has never had a bloom. A leaf makes only one blossom stalk unless it has been almost totally removed when young. In that case, it sometimes makes two.

I take care to remove the sucker without gouging the plant stem. I always dab a bit of No. 1 Stim Root on the wound as well as the bottom of the plantlet (sucker) which I place in a small depression on the center of a clean small pot of fresh soil mix. No. 1 StimRoot is a hormone formula that stimulates rapid rooting of softwood cuttings, and I believe it helps the wound to heal. Not everyone uses it. Maybe it is just my imagination? Many miniature and semiminiature African violets do sucker when young, especially many of the older varieties. It seems as soon as they start blooming, they no longer do this unless they are under stress from being allowed to dry out, etc.

If you want plants exactly like their parents, you must use suckers. In the case of the lovely striped chimeras, you will often only get suckers by removing the growing crown of the plant, forcing suckers to grow around the wound.

From *Chatter*, publication of the AVS of Canada

The American Swedish Institute

by Ruth Bann

The American Swedish Institute would be a grand place to visit while you are enjoying the AVSA Convention in Minneapolis. The address is 2600 Park Avenue. Its web site can be reached at www.americanswedishinst.org.

Swan J. Turnblad founded the Institute in 1929, "to foster and preserve Swedish culture in America".

The museum showcases the Institute's collection of Swedish glass, decorative and fine arts, textiles, and other items from Sweden. An exhibit titled "Swedish Life in the Twin Cities" explores the local Swedish-American community with the use of photographs, diaries, vintage recordings, and artifacts from the Swedish immigrants.

The house that the museum is in was built by Swan J. Turnblad, who was a newspaper publisher. The National Register of Historic Places has it listed. The chateauesque architecture is filled with beautiful carved oak, walnut, and mahogany interiors. The ceilings are decorated with painted plaster sculpturing. The two-story grand entrance hall is the centerpiece of the mansion. There are a grand total of 33 rooms. The mansion also features Swedish porcelain tile stoves called "Kakelugnar."

The gift shop has many imported Swedish and Scandinavian gift items. You will find a variety of books in the ASI Bokhandel (book store). They also carry cards, prints, cassettes, and CD's.

Park Avenue was a grand place when this mansion was built in 1929. Many beautiful, large homes graced the Avenue. I had the pleasure of rooming in one of these homes when I first came to Minneapolis in the mid 1940's. Every room had beautiful woodwork, and everything was very ornate. Just coming off the farm, I felt I was living in a dream.

I am sure you will enjoy a trip to see this remarkable house and the American Swedish Institute. The telephone number is (612) 871-4907. Since the Institute is only open at specific times during the week, be sure to call before going. They are not open on Monday or on holidays.

To read the AVSA Convention "Chatter", go to AVSA.org, click on the National Convention tab, then on "Report on the 2005 AVSA Convention"

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INTERPRETIVE DESIGNS

by Bob Green

There are two primary goals in making an interpretive design (both flower and plant) for an African violet show: one is to make it distinctive and original so that it will evoke feelings of satisfaction in the viewer; the other goal is to make it interpret or express a particular idea, theme, atmosphere, mood, or occasion as suggested by the particular design class in the show schedule. Any design that fails to interpret the theme of the class will lack distinction, even though it may be beautiful unto itself. Therefore, the first thing the designer must do before attempting to create an interpretive design for a show is to study the show schedule and the design classes thoroughly. Then create the design in strict compliance with the show schedule's design division rules and the design division class titles. If not, then chances are, the design will not be judged.

In African violet shows, most interpretive designs are line designs; that is, the designs feature the natural lines of the plant materials used, and do not necessarily conform to any set textbook patterns. The main characteristics of a line design are clarity and restraint. Clarity of line is most essential. The lines of the plant materials must stand out and dominate the design. They must be so compelling that the viewer's eyes will not pause long at any particular place in the design, except the focal point, but will continue to follow the lines without interruption. Restraint is limitation of materials used in the design or, in another word, simplicity. Therefore, the success of a design depends on what is left out rather than what is left in. A good rule of thumb is: if in doubt, leave it out.

Dominance of line over everything else in the design is expected in a line design. However, since the designer must, by necessity, use African violet blossoms or plants, the designer must create a focal point that will blend with or accentuate the line material, but it should still be subordinate to the line material.

The personality or character of an interpretive design will be determined by the character of the plant materials used. Since there are only two kinds of lines (straight and curved), there are basically two broad categories of design: those based on straight lines verticals, horizontals, and triangles, and those based on curves - round, oval, and spiral.

Once the designer has selected the piece of line material to be used for the main line, consideration must be given as to how to make it stand upright. This is most important, as whatever is used must anchor the entire design. The mainstay of any interpretive design is the device that holds it together. Plant materials can be anchored and stabilized in various ways depending on the nature of the material, the shape and depth of the container (if one is used), and the specific effect desired in the interpretive design. The most common, and certainly most functional, way of anchoring and stabilizing plant materials is with a pinholder. Pinholders (also called needleholders) come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and weights. Some are even built into cups of various shapes and sizes that will hold water to keep live plant materials fresh.

Plant materials with soft stems can be pushed easily into the pins of the pinholder; however, materials with hardwood stems are next to impossible to push into the pins. Therefore, I recommend using balsa wood pieces wired to the bottom of the hardwood stems. The balsa wood can be pushed easily into the pins and will adequately anchor the plant material. Wooden clothes pins clipped and wired to the bottom of hardwood stems work almost as well as balsa wood pieces.

Plant material, in nature, is always thicker at its base where it emerges from the ground. The trunk of a tree is thicker than its branches, and in a bloom stalk, the largest flowers are usually closest to the base of the stalk, with flower size diminishing gradually to the top of the stalk. In nature, these all give the impression of stability and balance. In interpretive designs, the designer should strive to do the same - keep the thickest, heaviest, and largest parts of plant materials at the base of the design. Keeping this in mind when placing the very first piece of line material allows the designer a much easier time in creating an interpretive design.

Once the line material is secure in the pinholder, if the designer opts to use a container, the pinholder should be stuck to the inside bottom of the container with stickum or glue. In design work, the best containers to use are plain, wide-mouthed ones that will sit flat on the table. The best colors for containers are shades of green and earth tones, such as brown, beige, and tan. Black, gray, mustard, and white are also excellent but should be used only by the experienced designer since they pose potential problems of container dominance over plant material.

It is time to add subordinate plant materials to give the interpretive design dimension, once the line material and pinholder are secured in the container. Subordinate plant materials (often referred to as transition material) should follow the main or leading line, except, perhaps, for some short opposing lines at the base of the design to cover the mechanics (the pinholder). The subordinate plant materials should be used in graduated sequence so that the rhythm of the main line is followed.

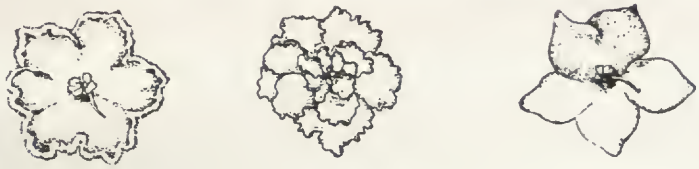
A base would be used under the container only if it would add unity, finish, and importance to the interpretive design. Technically speaking, a base, when used, is considered a part of the container.

African violet blossoms or a blooming African violet plant should be added to the design last and should be great enough in amount and color to create a definite focal point in the finished design. In an interpretive design, variety and contrast are necessary to prevent monotony. The color and placement of the blossoms (or blooming plant) add the spark that brings the design to life. Breathing space between the blossoms prevents a contrived or packed appearance. Darker colors of blossoms should be in the lower parts of the design so as to contribute to the balance and proportion of the overall design.

Should a designer choose to use an accessory in an interpretive design, the accessory must give the impression of being a necessary component of the design to the extent that its removal would reduce the effectiveness of the idea that the design is trying to impart. An accessory should be a planned part of the design from the start; it should never be an afterthought. An accessory should be placed so that it forms a part of the rhythm and direction of the interpretive design as a whole. Strictly speaking, an accessory is anything in an interpretive design other than plant material, container, base, or background.

Man-made materials may be used in interpretive designs in lieu of plant materials, or in addition to plant materials, but I, personally, like to minimize man-made materials in a design.

The Dixie News



Worth Repeating...From 1994

No One Wants a Scrawny Neck!!

by Virginia W. Gasper • Cincinnati, Ohio

Are you wondering what a "neck" is, in African violet jargon? A "neck" is the tree trunk that gradually forms between the soil and the leaves of your older plants, as the largest most mature leaves yellow and are removed.

To begin with, do keep removing these lower leaves regularly to encourage new leaves to form in the center. Old leaves have lost their usefulness and are sapping the strength of the plant. Blossoms form only from the center three rows, or rosettes, of leaves. Carefully examine one of your plants and try to learn to count these symmetrical rows of leaves as they radiate from the tiny center leaves. The fourth or fifth rows of largest leaves are really only providing background. Most serious growers keep their plants small by breaking off the oldest leaves as a new row forms in the center. However, this creates a "neck" which lifts your plant away from the pot and its soil. It looks like a plucked chicken's neck-hence the name.

Periodically your plant will have to be repotted deeper into a new pot. Here is the usual (and almost painless) method:

1. Select a clean pot of the same size if you wish to maintain your plant small. A next larger size is fine if you like larger plants, but no more than one inch larger.
2. Put fresh soil in the bottom of this pot. A paper towel piece will hold the soil to if the pot's holes are large, and by the time the paper composts, the soil will be set.
3. With your fingernail or knife, carefully scrape the neck to remove hardened "bark" and expose fresh green tissue on the stem. New roots will grow out from this area.
4. Use a pencil through the bottom hole to push the violet out of the pot with the rootball intact.
5. With a clean, very sharp knife, cut the bottom layer of soil off the rootball, roots and all. Remove a little more from the bottom than one length of the neck, plus the fresh soil you put in the pot. If you put in half an inch of soil, and your neck is half an inch long, remove an inch of the rootball. This is a chilling process at first, but like a surgeon, you get used to it once you see a few patients live. Carefully work off any loose soil clinging to the remaining roots.
6. Now press your violet gently, but firmly, down into the new pot until the remaining roots make good contact with the fresh soil. This contact is important for growth and watering, so don't be too timid, just gentle.
7. The leaves should now be at the rim of the pot. Put new soil in to cover the neck and almost reach the leaves. Water thoroughly from the bottom and return it to its usual spot. New roots will quickly develop along the old stem, and your violet should never know it had an operation! African violets can live for many, many years...

Please discard the old soil and wash the old pot in one part household bleach to 10 parts of water. It is far easier to prevent pests in your plants than it is to eliminate them.

Vintage Violets

Barbara Elkin
Vintage Violets Committee
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Auburn, CA 95602-9674
Email: bjabar@earthlink.net

You should be reading this article in November. However, it is being written in August, here in sunny California. Sunny isn't the right word, it's very hot, has been hot, and will continue to be hot. I'm hoping your November copy will arrive with a little frost around the edge.

The Vintage Violet Committee is going along very nicely. But, we could use some help with names. Please, when corresponding with me, use your full name, and a street address would also be helpful, as not everyone is online. I am still trying to get an address for Anna, who wants 'Elizabethan Ruffles', Marilyn W., and Adeline, in Texas. Please no partial names.

One more thing to remember: the plants listed on either the Master List or the Wanted List must be at least 10 years old. Only in rare cases do I list something that is a newer introduction.

AVSA Most Wanted

Andrea
Apache Land
Barbara Ann
Blue Butterfly
Blue Nymph
Brandi Jolene
Canadian Sunrise
Clarion
Conjure
Crusade Trail
Dark Crystal
Dixie Moonbeam
Echo Star
Eternal Snow
Esme
Esmerelda
Georgie Boy
Green Crystal
Improved Picturesque
Licorice
Lonesome Blues
Mr. Brain
Ms Ellie
Morea Surf
Ness's Sassy Lassy
Optimara Pennsylvania
Optimara Vermont
Optimara Yellowstone
Oui Do
Oui Yvonne
Our Maid Marion
Plum Sporty
Quiet Confession
Texas Daydream
White Whisper by Lyons and Winebarry

Coming Events

November 5 & 6 - MISSOURI
Mid-America AVS 26th
Annual Judged Show/Sale
Loose Park Garden Center
5200 Pennsylvania Ave.
Kansas City, MO
Nov 5 - 9am - 4pm
Nov 6 - 10am - 3pm
Info: Fred & Pat Inbody
(816) 373 - 6915
Email: kskd1@juno.com

November 4 & 5 - TEXAS
Lone Star AV
Council State Convention
Holiday Inn Emerald Beach
Corpus Christi, TX
Info: Marjorie Bullard
(361) 992 - 3009
Email: Marjbcrp@sbcglobal.net
www.lsavc.org

November 10 -12 - VIRGINIA
MAAVS 15th Annual
Convention
Comfort Inn
3200 West Broad St.
Richmond, VA
Judging School
Conducted by Jack Wilson
Info: (804) 594 - 0643
(804) 740 - 5322

November 10 - VIRGINIA
Judging School
Conducted by Jack Wilson
MAAVS Convention
Comfort Inn, 3200 Broad St.
Richmond, VA
Fee: $15.00
Send Registration to:
Carol Brown
4509 Boxford Rd.
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
(757) 474 - 0197
Email: caroljene@aol.com

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Charita gemella

Exhibited by: **Sharon Kemp**

Tips For The Tiny Ones

by Georgene Albrecht

If you do not already grow the tiny, miniature sinningias (sin-NIN-jee-ah), the aim of this article is to make you drool over the loveliest of small blooming plants. They may even rival my miniature orchid species simply because they bloom year 'round. Now, don't you growers of the large sinningias and other gesneriads skip this article; if you do, you are missing out on something very special.

There is hardly a grower who can resist the charm of these small wonders. Individual specimens planted in clear glass bubble bowls are simply smashing subjects in a light garden or for gift giving.

If enclosed, they will seed themselves readily to give a constant supply of plants with little effort on the part of the grower. The very smallest are *Sinningia pusilla, S. concinna,* and their hybrids. The illustrations at the bottom right are drawn relatively accurate to life-size. *Sinningia pusilla* can be grown in a one inch pot. Plants this small should be placed in a contained atmosphere. *Sinningia* 'Cindy' is somewhat larger and should be grown in a two and a half to three inch pot, either in a container or out.

These are placed about six inches below the center of two fluorescent tubes. The tiniest need less light and have flowered for me eight inches below an under-counter light with a single bulb. The more olive-green foliage such as *Sinningia* 'Tinkerbells' seem to need the most light and are placed as close to the tubes as possible without bleaching.

After planting, these will bloom for four to six months. The mix that is used should contain some dampened, finely torn, dried, long-fibered sphagnum moss. When planting, a fine layer of this is placed in the bubble bowl base, and then a few grains of charcoal are added. In the immediate center of the container is placed a small amount of my gesneriad mix. These plants also do well for me planted in pots and then placed in these bubbles, nestled in damp moss. No foliage feeding is used to avoid over-fertilization and to prevent buildup of minerals on the glass.

When the small tuber is removed from the old soil, it is a good idea to leave some of the old soil undisturbed. This also acts as a soil seeder of microorganisms for the new sterile soil mix. A newly planted and watered tuber should not be covered for a day or two in order to allow the foliage to dry completely. If over-watering occurs, twist a small section of paper towel around the end of a narrow bamboo food skewer or dibble as if creating a large Q-Tip. Tamp the soil around the planting until it absorbs sufficiently.

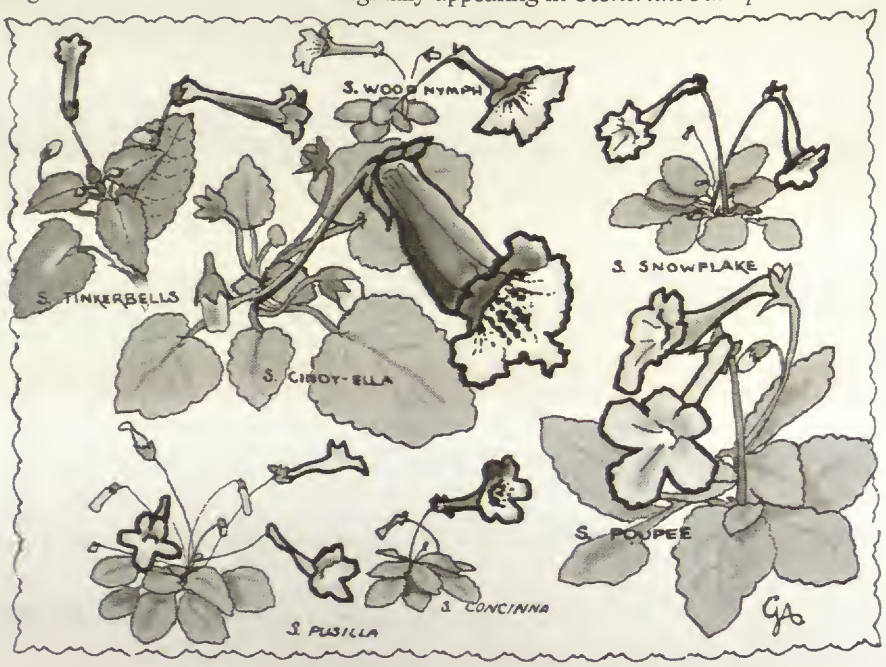
Never try to break an old flower stem off with your fingers. Stems are extremely strong, and most likely, the stem will pull the entire plant top from the tuber. Cut them with cuticle scissors.

The varieties in my illustration have done well for me, and so have *Sinningia* 'Cindy Baby', *S.* 'Ruby Throated Dollbaby, *S.* 'Ruffled Wood Nymph', and *S.* 'Freckles'.

When I see the tubers sending up small plants from the base of the mature growth, I remove the old growth even if it is blooming. This is rooted, and the new growth on the tuber is limited to just one main crown stem. Pinch the excess out.

Dormancy is not a problem for me, but excessive dry spells will cause this. Do not over-water a tuber showing little growth, as rot may occur. If a tuber becomes too large, cut it in half, making sure that you have an eye where growth will emerge from the center of the tuber. Let the cut heal well and apply a mild fungicide.

From *African Violet and Gesneriad News*
Originally appearing in *Gesneriad/Saintpaulia News*



Amateurish Violets

by Suzie Larouche • Toronto, ON , Canada

Whenever I see an African violet show, I almost believe that there is a law against growing species or hybrid violets unless one can come up with the plant that will make the cover of *Chatter* or the *African Violet Magazine*. Since I am also interested in other gesneriads, I must also suffer through looking at all the wonders whose photographs are featured in *The Gloxinian*, the journal of AGGS. However, the many experienced members of the clubs to which I belong unanimously assure me that such a piece of legislation does not exist. Although reassured, I still feel terribly alone in my plight and wonder if this lack of legislation is not compensated by a requirement to confess how asymmetrical my African violets are, or how the dry conditions which prevail at home cause them to blast their buds more often than I am really willing to tell. Unless, of course, there is a special tax on every leaf that has suffered from lack of moisture in the air or on each blossom that has failed to open because I am away from home so often, not to mention the repeated raids conducted by my cats, who firmly believe they are vegetarians.

Once upon a time, as a young bride, I could grow anything, and it seemed impossible for me to even damage those green gems. Needless to say, I was home every night after work, and I had all the time in the world to talk to them. Sometimes, I would even sing to them - mostly operatic arias. As a matter of fact, I had a feeling that Mozart was their favorite composer. With time, they came to survive without damage the heavy metal blaring out of my teenage son's room.

Then, one day, my work made me a nomad. Three days here, two days at home, three days somewhere else, three at home, six in another town, then back home just long enough to do the laundry and start on another crazy trip. How could I come up with a watering and grooming routine? My cats have their two sitters who alternate daily visits to feed and play with them, but they both claim to have a brown thumb and refuse to even go near the watering can. Is it surprise, then, that my growing wonders, watered either too often or too seldom, do not look their best?

Make no mistake, most of my plants bloom. Furthermore, very few of them ever leave me for the great houseplant afterworld. Their problem is that they look like women who have no sense of fashion. The potential is there, but little else. Stems reach towards the light because I am not at home when they need turning, or leaves are suffering from too much light, or their flower peduncles or leaf tips have been chewed by the cats. Blossoms have faded and seeds have escaped their pods before I could harvest them. No wonder my African violets and gesneriads get me awards at "dog shows" every single year!

Someday, of course, I will retire and become sedentary again. My cats will no longer need to give me the evil eye because they feel neglected, and my African violets will put out stunning heads of bloom over perfectly symmetrical foliage. Meanwhile, the sansevierias, which the cats no longer touch because they have experienced the stomach cramps that come from eating their succulent leaves, are deliriously happy. The aloes bloom their heads off every winter, and the haworthias put out offshoots as if there were no tomorrow. Why, then, do I want so badly to hold on to my other, much more fragile plants? The reason is simple. They greet me when I come home from a crazy jaunt. Over its ragged leaves, the flowers of *Saintpaulia* 'Green Dragon' make my winter feel like springtime. The double blossom of *Sinningia* 'Gabriel's Horn', gaudily clad in orange and purple, never fails to make me chuckle. My various specimens of *Sinningia speciosa*, as misshapen as their foliage is, never fail to remind me of a garden in August. *Smithiantha* hybrids, proudly exhibiting their flower stalks - albeit horizontally - let me know that they do not resent my being elsewhere when they needed staking. But most of all, because they will simply not die and go on growing and propagating, they make me feel optimistic. They remind me, in the dead of winter, that springtime will eventually return and reassure me, when summer feels like a furnace, that cooler days are ahead. And then, when I have days off, they give me hours of watering and grooming fun. And all the while I water, dust, and prune, I fantasize that, come next season, they will have perked up and look good enough for the cover of my favorite magazines.

From *Chatter*, publication of the AVS of Canada

STREPTOCARPUS

by Beverley Williams
Mississauga, ON, Canada

Streptocarpus is a large genus native to South Africa with four species from Southeast Asia. There are two main divisions within the genus. Subgenus *Streptocarpus* is made up of plants with typically strap-like leaves, which grow either from an irregular rosette with several leaves coming directly from the ground, or a single leaf which may be the only leaf the plant will ever produce. Subgenus *Streptocarpella* produces more conventional looking plants with stems and leaves and flowers produced from the leaf axils.

Most of the rosette species are perennials. The unifoliate (single leaf) species are generally monocarpic (they die after having flowered and produced seed once), but may live for several years before flowering. The "caulescent", or stemmed forms of subgenus *Streptocarpus,* can either be perennial or annual. The rosette form of this genus has been hybridized a lot and makes a very popular ornamental plant. The rosette type can be grown at a cooler temperature than most gesneriads. The unifoliate species have a single leaf that may range from a few inches to three feet in length and a breadth of a foot or more, depending on the species.

Another group of plants with a single cotyledon-leaf (the first two "leaves" which are really the splitting of the two halves of the seed) develops one to three other leaves on the petiolode some distance below the emergence of the first one. The new leaves produce their own roots in turn. These are perennials.

The third form, called "rosulate", is the one to which *S. rexii* and our modern hybrids belong. These plants produce a rootstock from elongation of the erect or prostrate petiolode from which the individual leaves arise, each capable of producing a series of flower stalks. They are, therefore, capable of spreading slowly along the ground in a manner similar to rhizomatous begonias.

The fourth form has several leaves growing from the petiolode and, in addition, the lengthened petiolode of one or more of the leaves may produce a secondary leaf, also able to produce flowers, thus giving some of the aspect of a branching plant.

The flower stalks or peduncles arise from the point where the leaf joins the thickened hypocotyl, and successive growth occurs in the direction of the leaf blade. This results in the first stalks being pushed backward and the last ones ending up at the base of the midrib of the leaf.

The flowers are extremely varied, but the dominant shape is similar to *Achimenes*. It is a long or shortish tube with an open-faced flaring of the lobes. Sometimes, the lobes are distinct and deeply cut; at other times, they are short and rounded, creating almost a bell shape. Normally, the lower lip juts out below the upper.

"Cape Primrose" is the common name for *Streptocarpus*. The name means "twisted fruit" and refers to the seedpod that opens spirally to release the seeds. Many plants have long straight pods which, when ripe and dry, twist and release their seeds; however, the *Streptocarpus* is different because the twisting takes place at the very start of the growth of the seed pod.

Some of the species are very difficult to grow due to the conditions required to grow them as the habitats, in many instances, do not match the kind of conditions we can easily give these plants.

PROPAGATION

There are many different ways to propagate *Streptocarpus*. Division is the easiest. There is no obvious center for division, but plants can be separated leaving two leaves which face each other. Place the divided section into a pot, making sure to have soil contact. Cover the roots

well, and bring the soil up to the base of the petiolode leaving the area of the wound open so that it is exposed to the air. Support the new plant with stakes if necessary and cover with a plastic bag until the new plant is sturdy and able to support itself. Remove the plastic bag gradually, either by raising it up or putting a hole in it to "harden off" the plant.

Seed should be sown on a medium that is light and porous and that retains moisture. Use a pot almost full of vermiculite with a layer of moistened, milled sphagnum moss on top, and then soak well or use a straight soilless mix. The seed is extremely small so extra care should be taken. Take a piece of paper, crease it, place your seed in the crease, and carefully tap the paper until the seeds tumble into the medium, spreading them evenly over the surface. Place the container in a plastic bag so that humidity can be maintained around the seeds. Gesneriad seeds require light to germinate. Do not cover the seeds with medium. Place in a fairly warm area and wait for the seedlings to develop. When two or three pairs of leaves develop, separate carefully, getting as much of the root system as possible into individual pots.

Leaf halves are a commonly used method of propagating *Streptocarpus*. After removal of the center vein of the leaf using a sharp razor blade, put the half-sections into a starter mix so that the cut edge is buried one-quarter inch deep. Firm contact with the mix is important, so supports may be used to hold down the leaf. Plantlets will develop at the ribs of the leaf.

Leaf cuttings can be propagated by placing them into starter mix. Select a leaf in good condition. Place the bottom stem edge down into the starter mix and put into a plastic bag. *Streptocarpus* leaves may also be divided into two pieces creating a wedge that is inserted stem edge down into the starter mix. When plantlets develop two or more pair leaves at the base of the stem, pot into potting medium. This method does not produce as many plantlets as the leaf halves.

TEMPERATURE

These plants can be grown at a cooler temperature than most gesneriads; in fact, they prefer it. The proper range for all of them is 13-24° C. (55-75° F.), with some varieties showing better tolerance up to a little over 27° C. (80 F.), but not many. Another source suggests that normal home temperatures are usually suitable for gesneriads. Daytime temperatures of 13-24° C. (55-75° F.) with a 5-degree drop at night are considered ideal for most gesneriads. *Streptocarpus* cannot take hot temperatures and will wilt under hot conditions.

WATER AND FERTILIZER

Water regularly with 20-20-20 or 15-30-15 fertilizer, using room temperature water. Use one-tenth to one-quarter the strength recommended on the label directions. Use this strength every time you water your plants, but once a month use plain water to flush out accumulated salts. Many sources recommend a fertilizer with a high potash content, others high in potassium. Do not overfeed as the roots are delicate and can burn easily.

It is important not to overwater *Streptocarpus*; wait until the soil feels dry to the touch. Overwatering, in particular regular overwatering, will cause harm to the root system. The first symptom of overwatering is exactly the same as for underwatering. The plant will wilt. Make sure that the soil is allowed to dry between waterings.

I find that 20-20-20 used at a strength of 1ml to 4 litres (1/4 tsp to a gallon of water) works well, or you may wish to alternate with 12-36-14 or 15-30-15. If you are growing on your windowsill, use half this suggested strength in the winter months.

LIGHT

Bright to moderate light is required. Fluorescent light set-ups with cool white lamps are adequate. Lights should be turned on for 10-14 hours per day and be approximately 20-40 cm (8-16 inches) above the plants.

SOIL

Use a loose, well-drained medium containing materials like perlite or horticultural charcoal so that the mixture allows air to surround the roots. Some growers prefer peat moss only; plants grow well in peat-based soilless mixes with a pH of 5.6, especially when 15% soil is added for buffering and trace elements. A good quality African violet soil is fine. The pH (measure of acidity or alkalinity) should be in the range of 6.5 to 7.0 with the ideal probably being 6.8. Water may be acid or alkaline. If you suspect a pH problem, check your water as plants can only access the fertilizer nutrients within a narrow range of pH.

From *Chatter*, publication of the AVS of Canada
Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

COMMENTS FOR EXHIBITS

Compiled by Sue Ramser

Requests have been received for a listing of some of the favorite comments judges place on entry cards. The following is only an attempt to make suggestions of comments and should not be considered required comments. Creativity and spontaneity is always encouraged. The student judge may find this a helpful tool.

When writing comments, care should be taken not to offend the exhibitor. Something positive should be said first, and above all, try to be constructive. Many comments can be found in the **Judges Handbook,** both positive and negative, and therefore would not be personalized according to the judge's sensitivity or lack thereof

With experience a judge will be able to look at a plant or design and form an appropriate comment without using "canned" comments. Always remember, judges should exhibit the characteristics of tact and kindness.

HORTICULTURE

Delightful coloration of blooms.
Good contrast in variegation of leaves.
It's nice to see an "oldie" in a show once again.
This is a lovely plant, but it does not have enough blossoms.
This plant has excellent potential, but it has secondary leaves and marred ones that need to be removed.
Plants with long neck or thin ones should have been set down and re-potted.
Beautiful blossoms but your plant needs grooming and cleaning.
Too many spent blooms and blossom stalks.
Plant is way over-potted – or under-potted – always remember that the pot should be one-third the leaf span. Beautiful or healthy foliage.
Blossoms are weary.
Blossom coverage incomplete.
Bare stems should be covered by repotting.
This plant has great potential – (and then note where the culture or grooming might be improved).
Removing a few outer leaves would improve your symmetry.
Great potential!
Beautiful blooms – so nice – too much space between outer leaves.
Nice color combination.
Lacks bloom and symmetry.
Lovely plant which attention to grooming would enhance the overall appearance. Plant and blossoms are fresh and clean.
Good, clean, fresh.
Your plant shows great care and good culture.
Excellent bloom, well done.
Very pretty plant. Keep up the good growing!
Lacks symmetry.
Needs more blossoms.
Nice foliage or bloom.
Nice clean plant.
Plant needs grooming, brushing. Violet off-center in pot.
Baby leaves should be removed. Faded blossoms.
Slightly torn leaf.
Spots on leaves.
Slight neck on plant. Beginning of a sucker. Slight gap in symmetry.
Some judges use the comment on a small plant, "immature plant". The **Handbook** has no requirement for the size of a standard plant.
Say "thank you for entering".

DESIGN

Marked superiority.
Maximum statement with minimum material.
Subtle harmonious color coordination.
Weak linear material at top.
Lovely rhythmic interpretation.
All material on one plane. Feeling of inadequate depth.
Pleasing color coordination.
Perfection.
Over-abundance of plant material.
Background is distracting, overpowers plant material.
Beautifully executed theme.
Exciting choice of color.
Pleasing combination of plant material.
Creative choice of components.
Size and weightiness of ___ rendered plant material insignificant. Interpretation of theme, through use of color, outstanding.
Additional transition material needed.
Ingenious interpretation.
Dramatic.
Scale and proportion well executed.
Attractive color harmony.
Flower and container too large for design.
Base out of proportion.
Imaginative.
Interesting combination of material.
Bold and expressive choice of vibrant color.
Dynamic, moving interpretation.
Creative use of space.
Visual rhythm is disturbed by static placement ___.

Bright, fresh and exciting color.
Creative choice of plant material pleasingly weird.

(This was a comment placed on an arrangement for Halloween).
Misses interpretation of ____.
Very interpretive of class.
Floral area too dominant.
Line is not distinct.
No dominant focal point.
Discordant color combination,
Arrangement has potential but does not conform to schedule.
Most important to study schedule – it's the law of the show.
Lovely entry but your violets should be the highlight.
Your design is lovely, Remember to use more of space available,
Not conforming to schedule – like so___.

There is a tendency on the part of judges to wear threadbare such words as excellent, good, poor. It would be helpful indeed to compile a list of words and phrases that would better describe the faults or virtues of an exhibit, such as:

EXCELLENT: Reveals clear understanding of design principles - recurrent qualities easily discernible - undeniable relationships - superior - remarkable - exceedingly good - superlative - a high degree of perfection - incomparable - masterfully handled - superb - admirable -exquisite - free from imperfections - gratifyingly rich - exceptional - elegant - splendid - distinguished - illustrious - notable - outstanding prominent - unequivocal - surpassing - magnificent - flawless - extraordinary - exceptional merit - a more comprehensive understanding - utmost - remarkable degree - a high order of excellence - notably effective - dazzlingly dramatic - consistent dynamic relationships - delightful interweaving of related qualities - compels admiration - unerring sense of appropriateness - deliberately exciting - correctly simulates natural growth - consistent style and technique.

GOOD: Sense of fitness - reflects good taste - meaningful relationships - agreed in purpose - well adjusted - agreeable - satisfactory - pleasant - apparent - obvious unmistakable - evident - conform - acceptable - correct - appropriate - fair - proper - accurate - definite - sufficient - adequate - attractive - unity - gratifying - competent - well adapted - favorable - well qualified - skillful - suitable - effective - sound - passable - . commendable - comfortable - desirable - lovely - enchanting - attractive - sufficient strength - decided rhythmic flow - a special consistent quality - reasonable relationship consistent style - easily discernible - a unified expression - relationship of likeness - recurrent qualities - sense of rightness - well suited to a given purpose.

POOR: Conflicting qualities, purposes - lacks inherent likeness - includes irrelevant inconsequential materials - awkward - ill-contrived - ill-suited - improper - inadequate inappropriate - misapplied - unsuitable - inconsistent - incompatible - imperfect - deficient - disagreeable - unworthy - unpleasant - inferior - defective -clumsy - ungainly - disassociated - disorder - disconnected - disturb - confusion - displeasing - offending - unfavorable - conflicting - artless perplexing - meager - fault - defective - unnatural - lacking in a certain quality - misusage - useless - unsatisfactory - undesirable - superficial - to a certain degree - disjointed - distention - serves no constructive purpose - strength dissipated with over-elaboration - feeling of insecurity - loosely knit.

"Diplomacy is to do and say the nastiest things in the nicest way." When this is observed, there should not be any of the phrases that would offend the exhibitor.

Poor judgment is a loathsome thing that can never be completely outlawed, for judges cannot be trained to robot efficiency, but we can condemn careless indifference and a veneer of understanding.

If you are a judge who was not able to participate in the original survey which led to the compilation of this article, please feel free to contact Sue Ramser by email at ramserwf@wf.net. This article was prepared for *Teaching Tools* that the Shows and Judges Committee offered to Judging School Teachers. This publication is currently being revised, and your additional "Judges' Comments" are welcomed.

All Library Requests Must Be Made in Writing to the African Violet Society of America Office

Science Museum of Minnesota

by Ruth Bann

One of the tours available at the Minneapolis Convention will be a tour to the Science Museum of Minnesota. It is located at 120 West Kellogg Blvd. in St Paul, telephone number (651) 221-9444, web site www.smm.org. E-mail info@smm.org. A major highlight of the Science Museum of Minnesota is the Dinosaurs and Fossils Gallery. The gallery, with its amazing dinosaur and fossil displays and interaction exhibits, gives visitors an unparalleled opportunity to experience the museum's world-class collection of prehistoric specimens. This gallery covers 10,000 square feet of exhibit space.

Some of the dinosaurs found in the museum are:

- Diplodocus which is 82 feet long.
- Triceratops, which is one of only four mounted real specimens anywhere in the world, and is also the largest complete Triceratops specimen on display.
- Camptosaurus, which is the largest Camptosaurus by far that has ever been discovered.
- Xiphactinus is an example of the largest bony fish ever known.
- Stegosaurus is thought to be a dinosaur that used solar power.

Many more dinosaurs and fossils will peak your interest. Before you leave this area, visit the Science Museum's scenic atrium, which is just adjacent to this gallery. While there, enjoy a panoramic view of the Mississippi River.

Another point of interest is the Mississippi River Gallery. Visit this exhibit to see the science of the river brought to life. Here you can also test your skills as a riverboat pilot. Learn about lives and culture of Native Americans in our area. Compare the Mississippi River during the "Ice Age" to the river as it is today.

Some Gallery Highlights:

- Fly down the Mississippi from its start at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico.
- See live Mississippi River fish in the Science Museum's aquarium.

More points of interest include the Omni Theater, which is a convertible dome theater and is the first of its kind in the United States. Call 651-221-9444 to find out what is showing and the hours.

An Experiment Gallery, A Human Body Gallery, and much more are available for your enjoyment.

What one thing do you like best about the Science Museum of Minnesota that makes you want to visit the museum? This was a question asked of three Minnesotans that visit the Science Museum often. "The Omni Theater", was David's answer, "The atmosphere is one of learning new things at the museum. I learn something new every time I go", he replied. Arthur, who is a father of two children, gave me this answer, "I enjoy watching the hands-on science experiments the staff does with kids. The last time I was at the Science Museum, they were showing the kids some very cool things with carbon dioxide. Like blowing bubbles that would not sink in a tank of carbon dioxide. The kids thought it was cool, and it was fun to watch". When Cindy was asked this question, she replied, "I enjoy visiting the Minnesota Science Museum to view their various exhibits. Many exhibits are permanent, and some are interactive. Other exhibits are only there for a short time and then changed to display another collection. At one time, an exhibit hall may have a photography collection, and a short time later, it has changed to display the largest travel collection of dinosaur bones from China." I would like to add my interests to these musings from our friends in Minnesota as I am always interested in the Mississippi River. It flows only a half mile from my house, and its beginning is right here in Minnesota. I feel the Mississippi River Gallery would be tremendously interesting.

There are eight acres of indoor space that house the Science Museum of Minnesota. It might be wise to plan an extra day so as to see everything.

Planting by Moon Signs

Moon in Aries

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds, pests, etc., and for cultivating.

Moon in Taurus

Productive and moist, earthy and feminine. Used for planting many crops, particularly potatoes and root crops, and when hardiness is important. Also used for lettuce, cabbage, and similar leafy vegetables.

Moon in Gemini

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds and pests, and for cultivation.

Moon in Cancer

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. This is the most productive sign, used extensively for planting and irrigation.

Moon in Leo

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. This is the most barren sign, used only for killing weeds and for cultivation.

Moon in Virgo

Barren and moist, earthy and feminine. Good for cultivation and destroying weeds and pests.

Moon in Libra

Semi-fruitful and moist, airy and masculine. Used for planting many crops and producing good pulp growth and roots. A very good sign for flowers and vines. Also used for seeding hay, corn fodder, etc.

Moon in Scorpio

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Nearly as productive as Cancer; used for the same purposes. Especially good for vine growth and sturdiness.

Moon in Sagittarius

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for planting onions, seeding hay, and for cultivation.

Moon in Capricorn

Productive and dry, earthy and feminine. Used for planting potatoes, tubers, etc.

Moon in Aquarius

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for cultivation and destroying noxious growths, weeds, and pests.

Moon in Pisces

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Used along with Cancer and Scorpio, especially good for root growth.

November Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase
1 Tue. 2:29 am	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	New 8:25 pm
2 Wed.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	1st
3 Thu. 8:55 am	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	1st
4 Fri.	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	1st
5 Sat. 1:17 pm	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
6 Sun.	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
7 Mon. 4:31 pm	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
8 Tue.	Aquarius	Air	Barren	2nd 8:57 pm
9 Wed. 7:22 pm	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	2nd
10 Thu.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	2nd
11 Fri.10:22 pm	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
12 Sat.	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
13 Sun.	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
14 Mon. 2:02 am	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
15 Tue.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	Full 7:58 pm
16 Wed. 7:10 am	Gemini	Air	Barren	3rd
17 Thu.	Gemini	Air	Barren	3rd
18 Fri. 2:42 pm	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
19 Sat.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
20 Sun.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
21 Mon. 1:10 am	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd
22 Tue.	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd
23 Wed. 1:41 pm	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th 5:11 pm
24 Thu.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th
25 Fri.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	4th
26 Sat. 1:58 am	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th
27 Sun.	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th
28 Mon. 11:33 am	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
29 Tue.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
30 Wed. 5:32 pm	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	4th

December Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase
1 Thu.	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	New 10:01 am
2 Fri. 8:42 pm	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
3 Sat.	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st
4 Sun. 10:36 pm	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
5 Mon.	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
6 Tue.	Aquarius	Air	Barren	1st
7 Wed. 12:44 am	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	1st
8 Thu.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	2nd 4:36 am
9 Fri. 4:02 am	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
10 Sat.	Aries	Fire	Barren	2nd
11 Sun. 8:46 am	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
12 Mon.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
13 Tue. 2:59 pm	Gemini	Air	Barren	2nd
14 Wed.	Gemini	Air	Barren	2nd
15 Thu. 11:01 pm	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	Full 11:16 am
16 Fri.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
17 Sat.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	3rd
18 Sun.9:18am	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd
19 Mon.	Leo	Fire	Barren	3rd
20 Tue. 9:39 pm	Virgo	Earth	Barren	3rd
21 Wed.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	3rd
22 Thu.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	3rd
23 Fri. 10:26 am	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th 2:36 pm
24 Sat.	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	4th
25 Sun. 9:04 pm	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
26 Mon.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
27 Tue.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	4th
28 Wed. 3:43 am	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	4th
29 Thu.	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	4th
30 Fri. 6:35 am	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	New 10:12 pm
31 Sat.	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	1st

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BASIC CARE

by Sheila Walton

So, you have bought or been given an African violet. Terrific Now what are you going to do with it? In spite of what you may hear, African violets are surprisingly tolerant of mismanagement and often survive in spite of their owners!

There are some important things which you need to know to assist your plant to be its best and reward you with beautiful flowers for many years. Yes, with care plants can live for many years.

TEMPERATURE: It is very appropriate for us to consider temperature at this time of the year. We have experienced extremes in weather over the last few weeks, and although our African violets live indoors, it reminds us that the temperature in our homes can vary greatly, and we need to adjust when possible to suit our plants. Ideally, the range should be between 15° and 25°.

Of course, there can be some variation to the ideal. Many homes would be considerably cooler in the winter and hotter in the summer. This does not mean your plant may not be able to adjust, but it does mean that it may not be able to perform quite as well. Try to have your African violets close to a window, but (isn't there always a 'but'!) do not let the sun shine directly on to your plants; it will bum them. A sheer curtain on your window will filter the light. In very hot weather, you may need to move your plants from their window spot or draw curtains or blinds. In the winter, of course, there can be a similar problem with the cold. Windows get very cold over night, so your plants will need to have a shield between them and the cold glass, either with curtains or blinds or moving the plants at night to a warmer spot.

We cannot control external temperature, but we can assist indoors by using air conditioners, fans, or heaters as necessary. Our African violets do not like draughts. Do not have cool air blowing directly on to them or hot air that will dry the leaves and flowers. If this sounds complicated, simplify it by thinking, "Would I want to be sitting in that draught? Would I want to be in that heat?"

LIGHT: Yes, light is closely linked to temperature. We think of sun for light and heat. Again, we cannot control the amount of bright daylight, but we can make the most of what we have. Your plant needs light in order to grow and flower. Lack of light is one of the main causes of lack of flowering. Bright light through a window is the best place for most growers to have their plants. It may be that you will have to try several different places around your house to find what suits best. Your plant will let you know when it is happy by growing well and flowering well. Ideally, 8 - 12 hours of light would be good for plants, but of course, winter daylight can be considerably shorter. This will mean that your plant will probably not grow as vigorously or flower as much, if at all, during the winter months. As plants naturally lean towards the light, you will need to rotate your plants regularly to keep them growing in a symmetrical shape. Artificial lights can be an alternative; this will be discussed later in the year, but if you can't wait for that, have a look in our culture book.

WATER: We know that all life needs water to survive, and our plants are no exception. They can, however, send out conflicting messages. A plant that is too dry will droop, and so will a plant that is waterlogged. How do you know the difference? The easiest way is to feel the top of the potting mixture and feel the weight of the pot. A plant that is saturated will feel very heavy compared to a pot that is dry. Your plant needs to be moist but not too wet. With practice and experience, you will learn to feel if water is needed or not. Cooler weather will probably mean less water is needed as the plant will not be growing as vigorously, so it will not be using as much water.

Hotter weather may require watering more frequently as your plant transpires. If you are just starting out on the African violet hobby, you may find it worthwhile watering plants individually as required. By doing this, you will come to be familiar with the look of your plant and how it is growing. Water should be tepid in temperature; it can be applied from the top of the mix, or the plant stood in a saucer of water for no more than 5 minutes to soak up water. Any remaining water should be discarded. Do not leave the plant sitting in water - it will eventually rot.

As you become more experienced, you may like to try the wick-watering method. This is useful when you have a number of plants and also if you are going on holiday and need to leave your plants to fend for themselves. By inserting a piece of acrylic material or yarn through the bottom of the pot, you can have part in the potting mix and the other part sitting in a reservoir of water. Water will then pass up the yam into the potting mix. Do not think that it will suck up only the water the plant needs; science will dictate that the potting mix will be full of water. This is fine if your plant is well established, growing strongly, and the pot is full of roots in an open growing mix. You will need to take note of the size of your pot in relation to the size of the plant, which we will look at shortly.

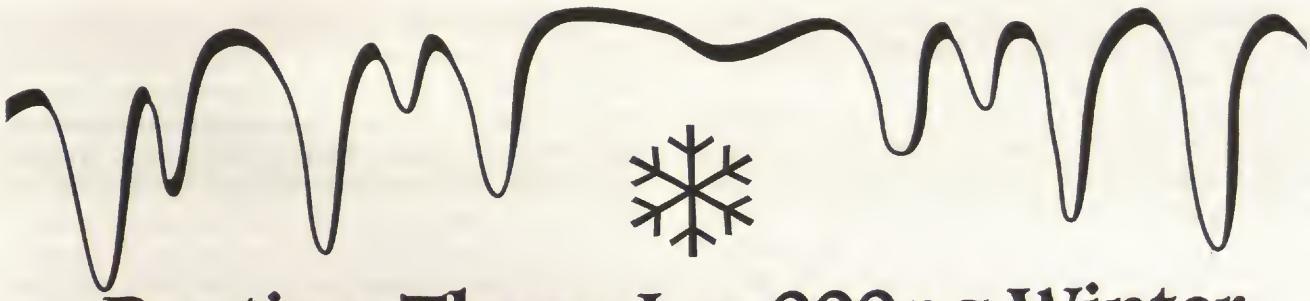
FOOD: It is amazing how long plants can live on water alone. However, if we provide them with a balanced diet, they will be able to grow and flower better. There are a number of commercial fertilizers produced for African violets.

Others may rotate different fertilizers. Which is best can be an on-going debate! I would suggest you stick to one to start with, and if you wish, try different methods later. Most growers would use a solution slightly less than the manufacturer's recommendation because we recommend the plant receives fertilizer continuously, and a build up of too much fertilizer can be detrimental.

POTTING MIX: The suggested mix for African violets is a light mixture of peat moss, vermiculite, and perlite with pH being adjusted with dolomite lime. pH should be 6.5 - 7. Again, there are people who have somehow managed to get their plants to grow in clay from the garden! This is not recommended. If you are going to have a plant, you may as well give it the best chance of survival and potential to bloom well. Roots of African violets are quite fine and need a light mix in order to be able to penetrate. The roots provide a stabilizing effect in the mix as well as drawing up nutrients for the growth of the plant.

POTS: As mentioned before, the size of pot is important to the plant. African violets grow better if slightly pot-bound. They do not like a lot of potting mix around them that they are not using. They will not grow to fill a big pot; they are more likely to shrink from the expanse of potting mix and become very unhappy. Potting mix, which is not occupied by roots, can be wet and cold and cause rotting.

From the *Newsletter* of the
Early Morn AV Group



Beating Those Looooong Winter Blues

by JoAnne Brown

We all know what's coming. Remember last year? I didn't see a spring bulb until April! This summer I did some thinking. Once again, I've ordered and planted the earliest spring bulbs I could find. Snowdrops are always at the top of my list and by reading the fine print you can find quite a few other very early bulbs - even a narcissus or two. Then I recalled, with the help of a few magazines that *Hellebores* (Lenten roses) and *Hamamelis* (Witch Hazel) can provide winter color, some as early as November! I planted one of each that I'll be able to see from my favorite chair. This is a test to see if I really do have enough sun. Then I started a few amaryllis bulbs - my proven winners. The perfect antidote for winter.

We can't control the conditions outside our windows but we know just what to do indoors: play in the dirt and grow African violets. Think of it as preventive health care, mental health, that is. Just spending time near the grow lights can make up for lack of real sunshine. I just love to cook up a batch of potting mix, spread out some newspapers and make a big mess repotting and grooming plants. Put on some music and forget the phone, it's a mini vacation. I check each violet and decide if it's worth taking up my limited growing space. Do I have enough blues? What does my collection need?

Do some research. Look through those catalogs. Go online and see what's available. Join a local club. Besides the fun and learning, you'll have a great place to get more leaves and have the fun of growing lots of babies.

Read those great articles and enjoy the photos in the African Violet Magazine that arrives six times a year. You'll find a new way to solve a problem, read about new growing techniques, or learn a new potting mix recipe. At first I just saved a picture or two but now I save them all and go back to these magazines again and again. Don't forget the November/December issue (this one!) has the AVSA's Best Variety List - try one of those favorites. And the January/February issue has an index for the previous year.

Try something new. Think about a tiny trailer with little perfect leaves and flowers, maybe a variegated variety that you haven't grown. It's important for us to grow species plants and keep those genes alive. You could try a gesneriad. There are lots of new streps, variegated and scented. Some places will ship through the winter if you haven't planned ahead. While you're at it, give one to someone who needs a little sunshine. Don't you feel better already?

From *Ye Bay Stater*, publication of the Bay State AVS

What Does it Mean?

Geneva describes an African violet flower which has a white edge to the petals. The name derives from the first plant of this pattern which was called "Lady Geneva", having being originated in Geneva Nurseries. Now you will find virtually all colors with white edges, including fantasy blooms with a white edge. Geneva is not used to describe petal edges of other colors.

Petiole is the leaf stem, and is not a word referring only to African violets. In plants all plants have leaf stems called petioles. They are frequently spoken of in African violet culture because we try not to let the petioles grow too long and weak, but like them to be strong enough to keep the leaves held horizontally, with each leaf covering the petioles of the rows below.

Peduncle is a word also commonly used in plants and it refers to the flower stems. Perhaps fortunately it is not often bandied around in the way that "petiole" is.

Double African violets are those with ten or more petals. Species African violets all were single (ie. they have five petals, arranged with two at the top of the bloom and three in the bottom segment-rather like a garden violet, in fact). Many hybrid African violets in cultivation, especially early hybrids are also single. They drop freely from the plant, sometimes even before they show any visible sign of being past their prime. Double flowers do not drop naturally from the plant, but sometimes have the disadvantage of being so full and heavy that they do not sit up very well on the plant. **Semidouble** African violets are probably the most popular. They have six to nine petals and do not drop from the plant.

Sticktite single African violets are apparently genetically double, and therefore the flowers do not drop. However they appear single, or at most the extra petals will be very small petaloids appearing in the centre of the bloom. **Doubleness/singleness** of flowers is further confused because at any time sticktite single, semidouble and double flowers can all appear on the same plant. (In that case it is considered a double). Other varieties can vary the amount of doubleness depending upon season, maturity of plant and cultural conditions. Sometimes one plant of a particular variety can be clearly double, while another can remain stubbornly single. In this way different flowers of the variety 'Frances Young', for instance, can appear fully double or completely single (or any stage in between). It is easier to grow the plant for its other good qualities such as good form, health and sturdiness, abundant flowers of appealing color, than to insist upon "double" flowers.

Leaching is something we all agree is a good thing to do to the plants, particularly if wick watered, but we often omit completely. It involves pouring clear, lukewarm water through the pot, letting it run freely from the drain holes until any excess fertilizer has been completely washed away, giving the plant a fresh start when it is replaced on its water reservoir. Advantages of leaching are that it will prevent imbalance of fertilizer in the potting mix or too strong fertilizer building up in the potting mix as moisture is evaporated away. It will also help to prevent so called "efflorescence disease" which is that crust of fertilizer salts that you can sometimes see built up on the rim and/or drain holes of the pot. In severe cases these salts may also appear on the main stem of the plant, causing burn. Salt deposits on the rim of the pot can easily damage the petioles which rest upon it, on occasion being the cause of outside leaves dying off.

From *The African Violet*, Official Journal of the AV Association of Australia, Inc.

Saving the Wrangler Legacy

by Christopher Mason

A few years ago I had the great honor and pleasure of meeting Winston Smith, the hybridizer of Wrangler's African violets. Mr. Smith, who has not hybridized or grown violets since the mid-1980's, is alive and well at age 79. He lives with his 10 dogs at his new home in Dayton, Texas, which is very close to Beaumont, the headquarters of the African Violet Society of America. Mr. Smith and I have developed a very close, meaningful relationship/friendship in which I have gotten to know all about the man behind the plants.

Three other violet growers and I have joined forces in the quest for Wrangler's varieties in an effort to preserve and propagate the series. Many varieties are probably lost forever, but once in awhile a rare one pops up out of nowhere. In the past few years our search has intensified, and about 60 varieties (which is less than half) have fallen into our collective laps.

We need your help. Please assist us in the preservation of Mr. Smith's legacy by contacting one of us with information about what varieties of Wrangler's African violets you have or know of. If you have cuttings available to donate of varieties we are seeking, we are willing to pay postage. Likewise, if you are looking for specific varieties, we may be able to help you. We are willing to do trading.

You can reach us at the following addresses:

- **Christopher Mason** - email: scollins42@hotmail.com (781) 223-8583- 630 Salem St., Apt. 310, Malden, MA 02148
- **Beth Meadows** - email: wyldmeadow@pincom.com
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Thank you very much from Mr. Smith and from us for your help.

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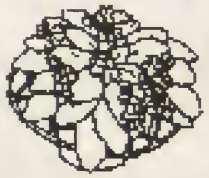

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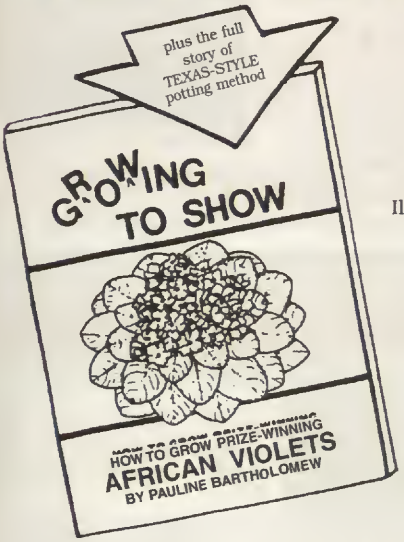
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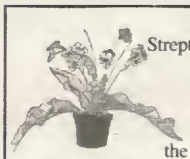

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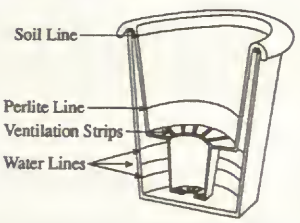

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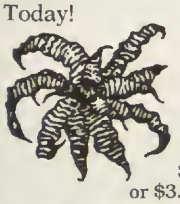

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